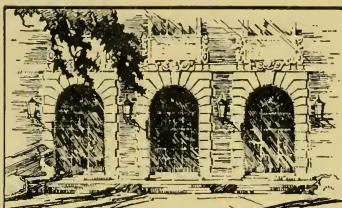


by Mary Burchard

of Nelly Lane

Morning



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
C932n
v. 1

NORMAN ABBEY;

A TALE OF

SHERWOOD FOREST.

VOL. I.

NORMAN ABBEY;

A TALE

OF

SHERWOOD FOREST.

BY A LADY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

JAMES COCHRANE AND CO.,

11, WATERLOO PLACE, PALL MALL.

1832.

823

2932m

v.1

TO THE READER.

MARSHALL
JAN 14 1832

ACCORDING to the plan usually adopted, it would seem necessary that an author should anticipate the severity of criticism by an elaborate justification of the criminal ambition which presses unprepared into the arena of letters. This custom doubtless takes its rise from the practice of divers heathen nations, and is inspired by the same latent hope of disarming, by propitiatory offerings, the supposed malignancy of the tutelar divinity.

To apologise, indeed, for efforts which originate in the simple and natural wish to please, implies at first sight a superfluous degree of modesty; yet, when we consider the vast and formidable host of literary aspirants, who profess the same laudable motive, our surprise at this timidity vanishes before the still greater temerity which urges a fresh candidate to bespeak the interest of an experienced

and enlightened public. Still, whilst a hope that such a consummation may wait in the rearward (however faint or distant) lingers around the imagination of an author, vanity will rather be encouraged by one solitary instance of brilliant success attendant upon the production of genius, than the judgment be deterred by the numerous melancholy examples of ignorant or unsuccessful speculators.

Waving, therefore, an exculpatory defence, which might lead to tiresome and egotistical verbiage, the writer of the present work trusts to the interest attached to the subject of the following pages for that modicum of grateful patronage, which she dares not solicit upon other grounds.

INTRODUCTION.

IN the Chancel of Hucknal Inkard appears the following Inscription:—

“ Beneath, in a vault, is interred the body of Richard Lord Byron, who, with the rest of his family, being seven brothers, faithfully served King Charles the First in the Civil Wars; who suffered much for their loyalty, and lost all their present fortunes; yet it pleased God so to bless the honest endeavours of the said Richard Lord Byron, that he re-purchased part of their ancient inheritance, which he left to his posterity with a laudable memory for his great piety and charity.”

* * * * *

In the old-fashioned manor-house to which I have given the name of “Ravenstede,” and the owners of which were connected by marriage with the above-mentioned family, remnants of an ancient, and, as it would seem, unfortunate

attachment, are still dimly visible through the lapse of ages.

That the original of "Norman Abbey" sustained an actual siege during the Civil Wars, rests upon very slender authority; yet, that it must have been a place obnoxious to the Republicans, appears from the devastation committed by Cromwell's troops.

It has been shown that the noble family to which it belonged were eminently distinguished for valour and fidelity to the House of Stuart. That they were also held in high estimation by the then reigning family is evident from a letter to the immediate representative, written by Charles the Second, and dated Brussels, 1659; a copy of which is in the author's possession.

These circumstances, and the fact that some apartments, built for royal accommodation, still retain their appropriate names, together with sundry traditions connected with them, have elicited the following narrative.

L I N E S

ON

S H E R W O O D F O R E S T .

WHEN the grey morn's sleepy eye
Through the tangled thicket glances ;
When the insect swarm, on high,
In the rising sunbeam dances ;
When the purple heather teems
With the night-dew's tearful beams ;
When on every leafy spray
Birds are carolling away ;
Come with me and catch the strain,
Wand'rer of the forest plain !

Haunt beloved of varied grace !
Though no savage grandeur ranges
O'er thy sober, pilgrim face,
Welcome its chameleon changes !

Where the rude plantation yields
To the richly cultured fields,
And, with Autumn's tint embrown'd,
Glow the heath's extended bound ;
Wand'rer ! come and glad thine eye
'Neath yon clear expansive sky.

Piercing through the densest shade,
Now the sun's obtruding rays,
Streaming o'er the upland glade,
Melt in one effulgent blaze !
Tinging with a livelier hue
Foxglove red, and harebell blue,
Furze, whose yellow blossoms bring
One perpetual golden spring ;
Wand'rer ! come and rest with me
Underneath the green oak tree !

Shelter'd by its branching arms,
As the noon-day fiercely glows,
Lull'd by legendary charms,
Shall our wearied limbs repose.
Merry tales of Robin Hood,
Druid cave, or haunted wood,

Kingly sport, or courtly glee,
Rude and graceless revelry,
Legends of a distant day,
Form our drowsy roundelay !

See ! the glorious night-star gleams
O'er yon consecrated shrine ;
Turn we, now, to sadder themes,
As our willing fingers twine
Buds of little charm I ween,
Save that they have blossom'd near
That long-loved and cherish'd scene,
To the exiled poet dear !
Claiming adventitious worth,
Thus embalm'd by fragrant earth.

Now the shades of ev'ning fall,
Heavily our footsteps tread
Where the twilight's sombre pall
Canopies the heather bed.
Couch'd is now the timid hare
Near to cruel reynard's lair,

And the lengthen'd shadows seem
Flitting elves of fairy dream.
Hark ! 'tis parting daylight's knell,
Native Sherwood—fare thee well !

NORMAN ABBEY.

CHAPTER I.

O! wad some pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!
It wad frae mony a blunder free us,
 An' foolish notion;
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,
 An' e'en devotion!

BURNS.

WHEN the French philosopher asserted that there was always something in the misfortunes of our neighbour rather agreeable than otherwise, his theory was indignantly rejected as a libel upon human nature.*

At his bold assumption, that the delicate fabric of our sympathies was cemented by selfishness; that our happiness rises in proportion to the privations of another; and that existing pleasures,

* " Dans l'adversité de nos meilleurs amis nous trouvons toujours quelque chose qui ne nous déplait pas."—ROCHEFOUCAULT.

like the illuminated figures of Rembrandt, are best seen amidst the depth of surrounding shadows—innocence grew startled into self-condemnation, pride rebelled, and ignorance, by its tortuous representations, converted the passing effervescence of misanthropic feeling into an obnoxious truism.

Without entering into the support of a doubtful sentiment, I shall only observe in defence of this *amour-propre*, that, like the great law of self-preservation, it appears to me rather in the light of a harmless instinctive feeling, than a quality of any determinate species. We take it for granted, there breathes not the person whose experience cannot furnish materials for sorrowful contemplation, or to whom the obtrusion of collateral griefs will not suggest an equal liability of suffering.

The self-gratulation, therefore, which we naturally enough feel on such occasions, is not of a nature sufficiently decisive to be tortured into a crime. It is of a character too indefinite and obscure; the involuntary feeling which pervades the bosom of the shipwrecked *solitaire*, as he con-

templates the yawning abyss which has engulfed his companions.

The human mind cannot surely be so constituted as necessarily to rejoice at the sight of misery, since Heaven has imposed upon its creatures the duty of lessening it.

If this duty be conscientiously fulfilled, shall we be blamed for rejoicing at our escape from those arrows which wound our less fortunate fellow-travellers ?

I am wandering into the region of metaphysics, upon a subject of mere physical sensation ; but, being rather jealous for poor human nature, I confess the Gallican maxim always stuck in my throat, and being supported by the authority of an able English writer,* as well as borne out by my own experience, I felt anxious, not to deck it out with false colours like the Chinese bird-fanciers ; but merely, and simply, to reduce it to a negative position, by placing it in the scale of natural impulses.

Whether I am right or not, I leave others to determine ; but it was, I suppose, under some

* Pope.

such natural impulse as that, which I have been blundering to describe, which made old Peter the herdsman set down his load of forest-wood by the hearth of the great hall in Norman Abbey, and fall to rubbing his hands over the crackling blaze with a peculiar degree of satisfaction.

Peter, who was a member of that useful community of "hewers of wood and drawers of water," inseparable from a large establishment, knew his way better through the cloisters of the old priory than amidst the intricacies of a rude forest, anciently the resort of freebooters and marauders, whose descendants still occasionally claimed their hereditary privilege. And though he was as familiar, and took rather more liberties than any druid could be warranted to do, with every oak in the neighbouring woods ; yet he was not sorry, when he heard a severe December blast whistling through the naked branches, that he was safely housed, and in the comfortable situation I have described.

" Good lack-a-day !" said the old man as he turned his ear from the storm without, to watch the movements of a band of merry minstrels, who

were, just at that moment, crossing the hall on their way to the banqueting-room, where a number of guests were assembled to partake of the annual festivities given in commemoration of the return of Richard de la Fontayne to the seat of his ancestors—"Good lack-a-day!" repeated he, in a louder tone, "what a storm 's brewing o'er Shirland Hills! it 's better to keep this huge bonfire a-going, than to herd with the foxes in Grassmoor cover. God help the poor wayfaring traveller, whom business or necessity sends forth on such a night as this! I'd not change places with him, no—not to be King Charles himself!—But stay," thought honest Peter, whose conscience began to upbraid him for his self-complacent boasts, "I don't know why I should be better served than my neighbours! 'Who made thee to differ,' as Master Jeremiah Faithful said in his last text, 'or what hast thou, which thou hast not received?'

"But I reckon," continued he, glancing at the tuneful choir, now stationed against one of the inner arches, "the storm may rage on for aught those wassailers at the other end of the abbey know or care o' the matter.

“ They ’ve lights enow to turn midnight into noon-day, and music and revelling enough to deafen the winds, and flagons o’ costly wines to drive away care ;—alack ! alack ! ” and old Peter shook his grey locks ominously.

“ ‘ The pipe and the tabor, and the viol are in their assemblies ; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither the operation of his hands. Therefore, ’ ” added he, in a low smothered tone, “ ‘ destruction shall come upon them unawares, and want as an armed man ! ’ ”

“ What art muttering about, old fool ? ” said an insolent serving-man, who, habited in a gorgeous suit of blue and silver, with flowered hose and peaked shoes ornamented with crimson bows, was escorting the party up stairs—“ What ’s in the wind now ? ”

“ Snow and hail, ” returned Peter gruffly, “ or Moll Canterbury on a broomstick ; ” or may be, added he, with a shrewd glance from the speaker to the motley train under his charge, “ a knave on a fool’s errand. ”

“ Gadzooks ! ” cried the undaunted Maurice, “ why, thou ’rt grown quite prankish in thy old age ! But I ’m too soft-brained for thee, Master

Wisdom," said he, adroitly concealing his mortified feelings from his admiring auditors under an air of mock humility—"I tell thee, man, it's all lost upon me: go to Lon'on, go to Lon'on; wit thrives best at court, they say."

"Ah! upon sorry garbage—a rotten fame and an unsavoury conscience. The Lord preserve me from such a snare! I'd rather starve wi' honesty on a common."

"Bravo! bravo! my man o' mettle!" echoed Maurice, with an insulting laugh, "How comes it to pass that thou'rt grown so knowing in state affairs? Hast been in the king's council-chamber, old hatchet? Why, thou'lt turn hawker next, and we shall have thee snivelling out at Kinsall fair, 'A peep into Babylon;' 'Filthy dregs from the City of Abominations;' or, 'Satan let loose for a thousand years!'

"Commend me to the Reverend Simon Love-the-Cross at thy next camp meeting; and hark'ee, old chap," said he with an audible whisper in the woodman's ear,—“prithe don't tell him thy deeds of grace in times of yore: to wit, that thou wert drunk as a beast this night two years, and

waked thy defunct dame with a sound drubbing, instead of a Christmas carol."

"It's a lie!" roared out the incensed Peter, whilst the goodly company of village wits chuckled over this successful exposure of poor Peter's besetting infirmity; "it's a lie, villain! the liquor was o'er strong and overpowered my poor head."

"Which, being naturally weak, I suppose gave the enemy a great advantage," replied Maurice. "Well, let that matter rest," winking at his companions; "but what sayest thou to poor Bridget, and her broken bones?"

"Humph!" replied Peter doggedly, "I had resolved not to answer a fool according to his folly: our blessed Master hath said, 'Ye shall not give railing for railing; but contrariwise, blessing:' nevertheless, it grieveth me to hear thy unsanctified scoffs; yea, it stirreth up ungodly strife."

"Well, about Bridget," returned the provoking Maurice; "let's have none of your long-winded sermons; save your breath, friend, to cool your pottage."

“ I wish my breath was a better match to thy impudence, scape-grace : albeit this weak arm may prove stronger than thy discretion in the end,” said Peter in suppressed tones.

“ Mutter away, old grumble-tongue,” replied the other,

‘ To sigh and cry—
Go get you by ;
Will groans and moans
Mend broken bones ?
No, no, say I—fal de la ;’ ”

whilst a blind fiddler, the Æsop of the village, drew his bow across the catgut, squeaking out a ludicrous accompaniment to the vagrant air which Maurice had strung at the top of his voice. The short-lived self-possession of the old man fled at the stifled gusts of laughter which succeeded Maurice’s extempore effusion.

“ I tell thee, rogue, once for all,” said he, “ that if my arm was as young as thy wit, thou wouldst not come off so well. Bridget was my yoke-fellow ; and though, in my unregenerate days, I followed not the Gospel command, which saith, ‘ Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers ;’ yet God forbid that I should ever abuse the weaker

vessel, more especially since I was called 'out of darkness into the marvellous light of the truth!'"

"Ah! women are frail enough in good truth: thou never mad'st a brighter speech, old wiseacre!" said Maurice, smirking at a cherry-cheeked damsel who was busily engaged in filling out spiced ale from a huge earthen pitcher, and dealing it in liberal potations to each attendant minstrel. "Here's a health to thee, wench, and a couple of husbands to boot!"

"Thank'ee, sir," said the girl with a coy retiring air, as she gave a civil curtsy and withdrew, unwilling to provoke the gallant's unceremonious attention. "A simpleton!" drawled out the serving-man, who was evidently disappointed at not attracting more notice from the pretty Alice.

"A nice discreet maiden," cried the sagacious Peter; "she'll make a rare wife," added he, most provokingly.

"Troth, a nice match for thee, old Roundhead," cried Maurice angrily. "Canst thou not get a good word spoken for thee?"

“ Roger at the abbey farm’s beforehand with me,” replied Peter coolly.

“ Gad ! I know the wenches are not over-nice now-a-days. Roger’s carter smock, and thy hedge mittens are nothing to a penn’orth of a true lover’s knot picked up at any idle fair, where it’s stuck up at the end of a pole to catch flies.” And the slighted gallant made a contemptuous *pirouette* upon his heel.

“ Come, sirrah,” retorted Peter, “ don’t run the poor lass down ; because, in the first place, she did not admire thy bravery ; and secondly, she could not relish thy discourse.”

“ And thirdly,” interrupted Maurice, “ she put an end to thy pious homily by filling up thy cup with a drop o’ creature-comfort.”

The incidental parley might have assumed a more serious character, had it not happened fortunately that Mrs. Margery, the baron’s sub-housekeeper, arrived at the critical moment when Peter’s sun-burnt cheek was growing to a red-hot flame, under the effects of his adversary’s malicious taunts.

This important personage was decked out in

her holiday suit of blue damask, of the colour baptised Mazarine, in honour of the famous cardinal bearing that name.

Her hoop was of small dimensions, yet sufficiently enlarged to render the circumference of her square-built figure superior to its altitude. Her peering eye, of almost superhuman darkness, even in a state of quietism, betrayed that liability to certain volcanic eruptions, which creates an instinctive awe in the bosom of all but those intrepid spirits, who think a little spice of the devil no bad ingredient in the female character. Her coal-black hair had parted company with her harsh forehead, and being tugged close up to the roots, presented the unpleasing aspect of a rugged surface, where certain interstices of tawny skin reminded the spectator of the common spectacle of a barn-door fowl in a strong easterly wind, with its ruffled plumage to the leeward.

On the summit of her *chevelure* rose a fabric of complicated architecture, terminating in a conical form, the remnant of a fashion introduced during Cromwell's usurpation ; and which, though of a very heterodox shape, Mistress Margery had

not thought proper to discard, for two weighty reasons; first, it was the gift of a rich puritan relative, from whom the wearer had some remote expectations, in the way of a testamentary bequest; and secondly, the said article of apparel possessed an intrinsic value, not to be overlooked by the thrifty economist. It had, indeed, been darkly hinted by the stern old baron, who carried his loyalty to the highest pitch of orthodoxy, that during his wandering in the Low Countries, subsequently to his unfortunate defeat by Fairfax, certain usages had crept into his establishment, altogether inconsistent with his well-known allegiance to the house of Stuart.

Whether rumour, in the shape of a busy and rather bigotted chaplain, had whispered in his loyal ears the horrible fact, that, during his long and frequent absences from the abbey, fanatical assemblies had been held under the great Parliament oak by certain zealots, styling themselves "Jeremiah Faithful," "Habbakuk Hope-for," and "Malachi More-Fruit," could only be guessed at by the suspicious glances of the sturdy baron at Margery's coiffure, together with a virulent

attack at republicanism, which generally came *on* when the cloth went *off*, and so soon after grace as decency would allow.

This latter ceremony was performed by the rubicund chaplain with becoming gravity and suitable emphasis, the baron himself remaining in an erect posture, and pronouncing a firm deliberate "Amen" to the weighty sentence which recommended our sovereign lord the king to the special favour of Heaven.

But to return to Mistress Margery, who made her appearance just in time to hear the comments of Maurice on her unreasonable reserve. The good dame, contrary to her usual habits of bustling importance, advanced towards the grand staircase, with a measured dignity of pace, and borrowing additional elevation from a pair of high-heeled satin shoes, exclaimed in a shrill, piping voice, as a fierce glance stole from her sharp black eyes towards the quarter where Maurice was lounging at his ease, "Fie upon ye! fie upon ye, fellow! to let your tongue run at this rate; can't ye let old Peter alone? Don't think he'll humble to such a varlet as thee, with all thy out-

landish gibberish! No; Peter's the Bible at his fingers' ends, and that's more than thou canst boast!"

"A mighty 'cute observation!" whispered the serving-man to David, the blind fiddler; "for I've got the cold in them just now," rubbing his knuckles.

"Go along, go along," said Mistress Margery, moving her red fleshy arms with a strong inclination to make a forcible ejection of the party: "don't keep the men waiting in the passage, whilst you stand gabbling to the wenches; I'll have no Dutch talk or French fashions in this house. Parly-voo up stairs, if you please, sirrah, or my lord may order me to show you a road you mayn't like so well. My certes! are the old standards to beat down to such a varlet as thee?"

"Hey-day! what's all this about?" cried Francis Lenthal, the venerable house-steward, as he came hobbling up the passage, leaning upon his golden-tipped walking-stick, and bearing on the summit of his bald crown the snows of eighty winters, now falling in scattered negligence upon his quaint doublet.

"You may well ask, in troth, Master Lenthal,"

replied the housekeeper, indignantly eyeing the retreating company; "things must be strangely altered since your days. I only wish the colonel wouldn't bring such kickshaws into the house: the sight o' company there is now to entertain, all so grand and rackety-like, turning the abbey out of the windows! Lords and dukes! nay, the king himself, for aught a body may know! and waiting-men and waiting-women (I'm sure they want waiting on more like'a—). And then, such a load o' vittles to cook for one or another—and ev'ry thing to come through one pair of hands—I declare I'm fairly run off my legs!"

"No wonder, no wonder!" exclaimed the ancient domestic, in a querulous tone; "it's enough to raise aw the Romans out of their quiet graves, to hear the rioting an' drunkenness there's going on down stairs; an' I reckon matters are not much mended above. Well, well! this work won't last for ever, I lay it out, Mistress Margery. It's no deeper than my lord's money-bags, an' they stand a good chance of being drained. 'But where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.'"

"More simpleton he!" said the housekeeper,

with a knowing toss of her head; "they may well say 'A fool and his money are soon parted!' Now if I was my lord, I'd never waste it o' this fashion. Why doesn't he keep up the old place a little, and save something for a rainy day, besides paying off the old servants, an' making 'em a bit comfortable in their old age?"

"Nay, I've no fault to find with my lord," said the old man; "the Fontaynes are a true an' honourable house."

"Well, but," returned the peace-marring Mistress Margery, "it's hard when folks have stuck by 'em thick and thin, not to be considered, that's all I have to say: it's o' no manner of use to talk of honour, an' all that, when the *means* is gone. Now, suppose the Fontaynes spend all their substance in riotous living, what will you, or Peter, (I say nothing about Mattie, she's feathered her nest, I'll be bound for it,) or Ralph, or me, do in the next generation?—Eh, Master Lenthal?—I should like to know *that*."

"Why, to be sure, if they go on as they've begun, it's like they'll be ate up," replied old Francis.

"Gracious preserve us!" suddenly exclaimed

the housekeeper, "what a yule block Peter's laid on the grate! I declare it's the root of an hundred year oak: we shall have the abbey burnt down. There again for ye, Master Lenthal, if I'm not here, there, and every where, things go to sixes and sevens. Move that log away, I say," turning sharply to Peter, "and don't sit crowdling there like an old hare in a thunder-storm."

"The Lord be good unto us!" screamed she, as the fire blazed with tenfold fury under the application of Peter's rigorous efforts to detach the ponderous log. "Let it alone, let it alone; you'll only make it burn the faster: look what a bonfire you've kindled! Lack-a-daisy! one would think you hadn't a grain of sense." And on went the restless clapper of Mistress Margery, scolding and rating for a fault she had herself occasioned, and laboriously endeavouring to prove it an unpardonable offence.

"Ah! I see," thought the old steward, who had been pleased at Mistress Margery's spirited defence of the herdsman, "Meg likes to do all the scolding part in the house, as well as any other share of the business, an' one wouldn't take the job out of her hands. Poor Peter!—it's plain if

‘butter won’t melt in her mouth, cheese won’t choke her!’” and so saying, he seated himself on one of the benches round the fire.

“Ralph,” said the active dame to the butler, who passed with a large salver of refreshments, “pray, Master Ralph, is that Sir Harry Bennet, or what’s his name, my lord has been expecting these two days amongst your company, up stairs?”

Ralph gave a negative nod. “Bless me! it’s very strange! I say, Master Ralph, what can have happened? my lord gave strict orders to have the green-room prepared for his reception.”

Here Peter gave an audible groan, whilst the old steward muttered through his teeth,

“I’d rather he’d sleep there than me.”

“Pooh! pooh! it’s all fancy,” returned the housekeeper, whose incredulity on points of popular credence was almost miraculous in her age and station. “I’ve been all over the abbey at midnight, and never saw a ghost yet. I do think folks make things out of their own heads: there’s no telling, to be sure,” said she, “what may happen. Old King James, they say, believed in witches and hobgoblins, an’ he was a second Solomon reckoned.”

“ And Saul communicated with the witch of Endor,” added Peter, solemnly, “ against the express command of the Lord, who caused his servant Samuel to rise up in judgment against him ; in that he had swerved from the commandment of the Most High. ‘ Woe be to the eye that seeth, or to the ear that heareth the semblance of that which we have known under a fleshly tabernacle ! it is but the shadow of our sins, and will prove the scourge of our iniquities.’ ”

“ Ah ! that’s what I say,” replied the self-sufficient Margery : “ it’s an evil conscience ; so long as one does nobody any harm, what need one be afraid ? ‘ Else,’ says I, to the poor scaddled wench, ‘ how dost think folk can get away out o’ the t’other world ? If they’re gone to a good place, they *don’t want* to come back again ; and if they’re gone to a bad one they *can’t !* ’ ” and pleased with the favourable interpretation which Peter’s words seemed to cast upon her constitutional hardihood, she drew near him, and added in a whisper,

“ I’m not surprised, however, the servants don’t like sleeping in that room, for nobody gets their

rest properly, and they're all in the same tale, that's certain."

"Mind your business, sirrah!" said the Argus-eyed Margery, to a poor hump-backed dwarf, who, though engaged in a mechanical duty, and innocently wrapt in very different contemplations, appeared in the suspicious character of an eaves-dropper.

The large heavy head of this poor creature was nearly buried in a pair of brawny shoulders, terminating in almost infantile proportions. To his bulky trunk, appended a pair of spindle legs, whilst the contradictory nature of his physiognomy bore the same indecisive character as the rest of his person.

Here the saddened gravity of mature years was strangely contrasted in its expression with a certain witchful frolicsomeness, which in modern days would entitle its possessor to the honourable appellation of "an unlucky dog."

The dwarf, mounted upon a rude movable scaffolding, was carefully trimming the hall-lamps; but his attention seemed divided between his immediate occupation, and a stealthy inclination to

watch the gestures of the large hound that lay couched upon a mat at one corner of the hall.

“What art thinking about, Andrew?” said Peter, who, though not of so old a standing by many years as the steward, nor withal of so much importance in the household, was yet allowed, in consequence of his faithful services during the adversity of the Fontaynes, a kind of sinecure post in their refitted establishment.

“Why,” replied the other, “I’m marvelling greatly (you know the gentles up yonder call me Andrew Marvel, the famous politician in Old Noll’s day).”

Andrew, it must here be observed, occasionally made one of those happy hits, which gained him as easy a reputation for wit as any treble-distilled vender of stale jokes could hope to attain in these degenerate days. Andrew was an oracle in his way as well as Peter; he was the fag of the household, the butt of the village, and the scape-grace goat to carry away all the mischances of the serving community.

“I say,” continued Andrew, “I can’t, for the life of me, guess what Ranger’s after: if the dumb

beast could but speak, I'd ask him who's by the lake at this very moment."

"Doubtless, Sir Harry himself, at last," replied Mistress Margery.

"How can that be?" said the dwarf, "Ranger never saw Sir Harry in all his life: he'll not be for knowing his paces."

During this short dialogue Ranger, who had been quietly slumbering after his morning's duties in the chase, where he attended as body guardsman to his master, started in his sleep, as if disturbed by dreams, pricked up his ears thoughtfully, from a strong instinctive sense, shook his glossy hide convulsively, with a low growl, and put his solemn face into a listening attitude.

Again Ranger drew himself into his snug corner with the air of a person beguiled out of his warm comforts by a false alarm, and again pricked up his ears, as if confirmed in his first impressions. At length, the distant sound of horsemen was heard mingling with the howling blast, as it swept through the ivy-mantled fragments of the old ruins.

Ranger, no longer doubtful, jumped upon his

feet, and coursing to the wide entrance door, set up a quick, joyous bark.

“The beast has marvellous sharp ears,” said the dwarf, drawing close to Peter: “why, he heard that gallop a mile off! Ah! and he knows the rider too, or I’m much mistaken.”

Here the great bell rang a furious peal, and shortly afterwards a tall cavalier made his appearance, muffled up in a French travelling cloak, and followed by an attendant, whose swarthy complexion and strange garb announced him to be a foreigner.

The unsettled state of the country for many preceding years, together with the great intercourse carried on between the European states, did not render it a fact at all remarkable that a gentleman’s valet should be of a different country from “Old England.” It is true that Francis Lenthal and Ralph, and two or three more as wise politicians, did think it a bad sign that the quality could not be content to be served at home, without going to a strange market for worthless goods. “They might go farther and fare worse,” was a mighty favourite adage of theirs; and “many a

serious plot was brought about by blood-thirsty papishes smuggled into honest folk's houses."

Of such a nature were the frequent conferences held in the steward's room; yet, as I was before observing, there was nothing in the matter at all singular; therefore Mistress Margery, after adjusting her silk mittens close to her arms, which she formally crossed over her bosom, saluted the supposed Sir Henry with a low curtsy.

"Your honour was expected yesterday," said she, "and the rooms are well aired; the stranger guests came down three days ago, and to-night my lord has opened the banqueting-room for a masked ball. There's the young Duke of Monmouth (he got a fall in hunting), and my Lord—but your honour may wish to dress in character," added the loquacious housekeeper, concluding from the cavalier's averted countenance that he was impatient to join the company: "if so, there are all sorts of disguises in the great wardrobe. Here, Maurice—James—Redfurn—where are ye? Do, Master Lenthal, show Sir Harry the way to his apartments."

The stranger, with a courteous inclination of

the head, passed on in silence with his attendant.

“ For all his queer mask,” thought Peter, “ I caught a glimpse of his eye, and I ought to know a true Fontayne by this time ; there’s a fire-flash in their eye, and a pride in their gait that ’ll never wear out as long as the breed lasts.” But keeping his thoughts to himself, the old man, after unfastening his pewter shoe-buckles, and untying his knee-strings, stole off to his dormitory, leaving the poor dwarf sole occupant of the dreary and majestic hall.

Left to himself, the poor creature gazed around him with an air of vacant wildness, till, to relieve himself from unpleasant sensations, as well as to shut out surrounding objects, he gradually drew up his shrivelled limbs to the farthest end of the long bench, and closing his eyes, soon fell into a profound slumber.

He had continued in this oblivious state for nearly three hours, deaf to the passing salutations of “ Curse the sleepy dog ! ” — “ Hunchback ! hunchback ! mistress is coming ! ” or the more compassionate exclamation of Ralph, the butler : —

“ Poor Andrew ! it’s a long weary night’s watch for thee ; and the lamps think so too, it’s my belief, for they’re waxing as dull and drowsy as his reverence at the latter part of his sermon.”

These, and similar allusions to his deserted post, failed to arouse the lamplighter.

We shall take advantage of this long, dreary interval to give a slight sketch of the noble Baron de la Fontayne, and those numerous branches of his illustrious house, whose unshaken loyalty formed a complete body-guard around the person of their restored monarch.

CHAPTER II.

CONTAINING, BESIDES OTHER MATTERS, A
PEEP INTO THE ROYAL OAK.

———— Whence his name
And lineage long, it suits me not to say ;
Suffice it, that, perchance they were of fame,
And had been glorious in another day.

DON JUAN.

NEVER did history, ancient or modern, furnish instances of a more chivalric spirit, or a more devoted attachment to legitimate authority, than are supplied by the annals of the Fontayne family.

Some of its members, as bold crusaders, had bequeathed their ashes to the towers of Ascalon, in memorial of their pious defence of the Holy City ;

others had perished victoriously on the warlike plains of Cressy ; and, though the rude music of the hollow blast, sweeping through the dismantled turrets of their ancient halls, recorded the triumphs of the veteran Time alone ;—and though the iron grasp of death, palsyng the hand of the minstrel, had silenced his victorious song ; yet had Tradition, that industrious gleaner of reminiscences, redeemed the names of these illustrious warriors, handing them down to posterity associated with scenes of hallowed recollection and deeds of valorous import.

Emulating the fame of their predecessors, Paul de la Fontayne and his noble brothers proved no unworthy descendants of a “ time-honoured race.” Connected by ties of personal regard, as well as hereditary faith, to the interests of the reigning sovereign, Charles I., they had shared his varying fortunes with a constancy and hardihood scarcely to be credited in modern days.

Actively engaged in the Parliamentary wars, they had suffered their patrimonial inheritance to dwindle into decay, and, deeply immersed in the stirring politics of the times, had beheld with in-

difference their princely revenues appropriated to the leaders of the Commonwealth.

To men, altogether guided by a chivalrous sense of honour, and a lofty contempt of personal advantage, these privations sank into insignificance, when compared with the superior claims, and abject condition, of fallen majesty ; whilst the privilege of suffering in so righteous a cause appeared to them the most valuable prerogative conveyed by their ancestral dignity.

The eldest of these noble brothers, who had been created general-in-chief in Ireland, during those unhappy intestine divisions which distracted his country, had returned with a victorious army, elated with past success, and ready plumed for fresh triumphs.

These flattering hopes were, however, suddenly blasted by the subtle policy, and desperate attack of the opposite forces, who, coming upon them unawares, completely routed them in the vicinity of Nantwich, and mortally wounded their leader.

With the blood of his brother yet streaming before him, Richard de la Fontayne hastened to supply his vacant post, and vainly endeavoured

to rally the scattered residue of his discomfited troops. Again, he entered the field of honour, and maintained a doubtful strife at the battle of Newbury, where the royal party, in addition to many grievous losses, mourned the death of the elegant, brave, and accomplished Falkland.

Four of these intrepid warriors sealed their faith in bloody characters on the field of Marston Moor, and the remaining three, after a long and vigilant devotion to the interests of their revered prince, now turned their mournful gaze from the hapless victim of popular fury, to his immediate representative.

Hubert, the third brother, had passed over with the young prince to join the queen-mother in France; and when the raging fury of a bloody faction could only be appeased by the utter extinction of the royal family, this princess, finding but little support from the French court, proposed sending her son to the Low Countries, as a more effectual hiding-place.

The accomplishment of this project was delayed by the earnest entreaty of Charles, that he might first be allowed to cross the Pyrenees, in company

with Walter, the only child of Sir Hubert de la Fontayne, whose vivacious temper and enterprising spirit were strong recommendations to the favour of the neglected prince. Disgusted with the cold and measured civilities of his kinsmen, and resenting with the fire, and unbroken spirit of youth, the ungenerous advantages taken of his unfortunate situation, the young prince longed to throw off the insupportable yoke of an insolent court, whose mockery of empty forms only served to remind him of his misfortunes. Instigated, also, by curiosity to behold the interior of a court in which his father and his favourite Buckingham had performed such renowned feats of knight-errantry, Charles hailed the arrival of his young and enthusiastic companion with sentiments of unmixed pleasure, and joyfully submitted to the strict rules laid down by the queen-mother.

These rules prescribed, that, in addition to a small and faithful retinue, he should be invariably and strictly attended by her own chaplain.

Such a provision, rendering unnecessary the attendance of Sir Hubert, the latter returned to England, and, after assisting in a series of unsuc-

cessful attempts to restore the legitimate power, found his most sanguine wishes suddenly realised.

The worthy knight lived to witness the consummation of his hopes, in the unexpected death of the Protector, the resignation of his unambitious descendant, and the accession of Charles the Second to the throne of his ancestors, with the undivided consent of his people.

Not more than two years had elapsed (at the epoch of my story) since the vigorous exertions of General Monk had contributed to produce an electric shock throughout the kingdom, more rapid in its effects than that fanatical spirit whose progressive advances, and sudden dissolution of power, mark the short-sighted policy and vain security of human institutions, proving most clearly, by the striking vicissitudes of a few short years, the controuling influence of that Omnipotent sovereign "who putteth down one, and setteth up another."

That course of events, whose tragical issue had thrown all Christendom into consternation, resembled the devouring flames which spread desolation over the sultry forests of the western

hemisphere. Existing circumstances might add fuel to the flame, but the fiery tempest was kindled by the lightning of Heaven! Opposed to this awful retributive visitation, the universal suffrage which placed Charles the Second on the throne of his ancestors, like the all-conquering majesty of the solar luminary, shone more conspicuous from the preceding shadows which had obscured its brightness.

A sentiment of remorse for past inflictions—a mingled feeling of tenderness and respect for the proscribed offspring of a martyred king, now possessed the bosoms of men, to whom dear-bought experience had shown, that the transition from liberty to licentiousness was more easy than their first impressions had led them to apprehend.

The act of indemnity which secured an unqualified pardon to all the late king's enemies, (with the exception of the regicidal judges,) together with his free, gracious manners and easiness of address, appeared to give ample security to these favourable prepossessions; yet there were keen observers, who, even in this early period of his

reign, drew unfavourable conclusions of his character.

Many passages in the eventful life of Charles had called forth the strenuous exertions and active services of his partisans. It is a fact well known, that the most artful stratagems were concerted, and the most dangerous risks incurred, to elude the vigilance of his enemies, during his travels through his own dominions as an outlaw.

Some few of these trusty friends of his adversity were remembered in the hour of his prosperity; but there was a careless allusion to past events—an infirmity of purpose—an indecision of action, which threatened to alienate from him the regard and esteem of those persons best calculated to strengthen his uncertain government, and extend the authority of his recovered sceptre.

The liberality—we might rather say, the profuse generosity, which the king discovered on his accession, towards those persons, whose connexion with the hostile party might naturally have rendered them peculiarly obnoxious, was perhaps, after all, but a masterly stroke of policy, by which Charles contrived to establish a firmer bond of

confidence between himself and his fickle subjects.

The choice of his ministry had been hailed as a sure omen of future greatness ; and the monarch who could so far sacrifice his just resentment to the public welfare, as to select from an opposing faction, men of honour and integrity to direct his government, could not be supposed deficient either in judgment or magnanimity. That intrepid act by which (as it is said on another occasion) “ the king bowed the hearts of the people as one man,” is one of those striking characters in the history of his worthless reign, sufficient to erase whole pages of frivolity and sensuality.

History records that when the Earl of Bristol moved for a dubious and exclusive clause in the act of indemnity, the king appeared instantly in person to oppose the measure, and to re-assure the nation by asserting that he considered himself bound by every tie of honour and gratitude, to adhere strictly to the form of his original agreement.

Such was the favourable position in which

Charles stood at the commencement of his auspicious reign ; but, alas ! for the incertitude of human affairs, a shade already lingered in the horizon, threatening to darken the fair land of promise, and utterly to annihilate the visionary fabric of hope !

The inconsiderate prince, in the plenitude of dignity and royal power, forgot the wholesome doctrines he had learned in the school of adversity. Fortune had been to him a hard task-mistress, and he seemed more anxious to repay himself for past privations, than to profit by her stern counsels. By gradually withdrawing himself from his early friends, and admitting to his confidence the licentious sharers of his convivialities, Charles not only tempted the perils of false security, but laid himself open to the heinous charge of ingratitude.

Indolently reposing on the lap of pleasure, and basking in the meretricious smiles of beauty, he allowed those noble cavaliers who had fought in his defence, and risked their fortunes in his service, to suffer all the humiliating consequences of their generous self-abandonment.

It is a melancholy fact that the very poverty of these noble-minded men was urged as a sufficient ground for excluding them from the high offices of the state, and the very abjectness of their condition was deemed a sufficient excuse for leaving them in the unmerited obscurity to which their unfortunate loyalty had condemned them !

It is true the good-natured Monarch formed no premeditated design to this effect, but he failed in those active services which their reduced state demanded ; and by his passive negligence, which could only be affected by the craving importunities of the worthless, he was preparing materials for jealous mistrust and painful apprehension.

Happy had it been for Charles could he have reposed with more constancy upon the virtuous and enlightened Clarendon ; but this prince, under far more favourable circumstances than his predecessor, inherited not from him a sturdiness of temper, which, under a different application, would have proved as much to the welfare of his subjects as that of his father affected and aggrieved their liberties.

Yet, if much was to be deplored in the banish-

ment of the once-favoured minister, no reasonable fears could be possibly entertained that the gay and witty Buckingham would ever, by the exercise of almost supernatural powers, arrive at that acme of importance which gave those triple tyrants—the elder Buckingham, Richelieu, and Olivarez, unlimited sway over the destinies of Europe.

On the contrary, the hereditary favourite of the house of Stuart was more anxious to share the pleasures and rival the gallantries of his sovereign than to guide him with his counsels, or assist him to steer the helm of government.

I have been detained so long during this (as the reader may account) *tiresome* political digression, that I must take breath a little before I proceed to the remaining branches of the house of La Fontayne.

CHAPTER III.

CONTAINING MORE PARTICULARLY, THE AD-
VENTURES OF A SAILOR.

He that would have trouble in this life,
Let him take either a ship or a wife.

OLD ENGLISH PROVERB.

ROBERT, the only surviving brother of the baron, by the lopping off of the numerous branches of the genealogical tree, became more firmly rooted to the old family trunk, and was generally found a stationary guest at Norman Abbey.

I have placed him out of his direct line, not because Dame Fortune, in her frolicksome mood, sent his brother Richard into this troublesome world ten minutes before she thought proper to

introduce his less favoured copartner; neither is the inversion caused by any lack of merit on the part of "Uncle Robin;" but simply because he was not so immediately and personally connected with the sovereign, whose character I have been accidentally discussing, as his more courtier-like brother Hubert.

It may be necessary to remind the reader that I have no intention to forge a new history of the court of Charles the Second, and that I am merely working up old materials for the purpose of elucidating a new subject—a necessary art in the historiographer as well as the biographer; and it is from this casual circumstance that Admiral de la Fontayne has stepped for a moment out of his proper place.

The sturdy old sailor was such a stout disciplinarian, that the smallest breach of order in his own profession would at any time bring a torrent of eloquence upon the offender's ears; but as to matters of hereditary distinction, God help the poor soul! he knew as much about the matter, and cared infinitely less, than the various nations and tribes he had visited in his wanderings; and

who, somehow or other, were strangely perplexed to account for their existence at all.

Now "Sailor Robert," though he was neither so profound as the Braminical Indians, nor so mystically accurate in his calculations as the Chinese philosophers, nor so sublime in his conceptions as the North American Aborigines, knew as well as any body could tell him, that the world must have had a beginning, and that all mankind were derived from the same common parent. It was a thing of indifference to him how or in what manner this generative principle was first produced—whether it arose from the sperm of a sea whale, was nourished on the back of a tortoise, or sprung from the petals of the lotus flower.

Whenever the subject was started, however, he always made it a point of duty to take up cudgels in behalf of the Mosaical revelation, by asserting, with a few broad oaths, that Father Adam was our primal progenitor.

As these asseverations were generally accompanied by a positive diction, and a determination to bear down all contradiction, his knock-down

arguments had always a silencing effect; but whether from conviction, necessity, or cowardice, remains a secret.

Admiral Robert had sounded his own depths enough to avoid any close discussions on so learned and intricate a subject. All that he could urge on this mysterious topic was, that if the world had been built so early as some nations presumed to calculate, it must have been fairly worn out by this time.

The reproductive quality of matter, its transforming and transmigrating operations, were subjects which required finer mental optics than nature had bestowed, or a more ingeniously contrived magnifying glass than the age in which he lived could furnish.

Literature was, at that period, confined to a privileged few, whose extraordinary powers or sedentary habits favoured the occupation.

Genius, like the blaze of a fiery comet through the darkened heavens, excited mingled sentiments of superstitious awe and blind admiration in the bosoms of the vulgar.

With such an exclusive order, therefore, it is

no matter of surprise that a sailor had made no familiar acquaintance.

The great philosophers of the age, Bacon, Hobbes, &c. must only have appeared in his eyes mere book-worms or privileged madmen.

Milton, Harrington, and Marvel, would have been denounced as roguish republicans ; though, out of deference to the unbending rectitude of the latter, he might have tacked such a qualifying sentence to his vituperative speeches as he commonly bestowed upon those whom he goodnaturedly suspected to be "good honest fellows at the bottom."

Such an appellation suited the admiral himself better than any one to whom he could have applied it.

He was a bluff, blustering veteran, who could storm at a trifle, and the next moment dissolve into almost womanly softness if any tender recollection crossed his mind, or any victim of petty tyranny claimed his warm commiseration.

Nor were his active services, or strenuous exertions wanting, as many a secret act of unostentatious bounty could attest, had his tongue been

as lavish in the disclosure as his outstretched hand was in the disposal of his favours; or had not the gratitude of the recipient, in too many instances, rivalled his own generous forgetfulness.

The admiral had served under Prince Rupert in the Dutch wars, and many were the "hair-breadth 'scapes" he had run on different occasions.

The early part of his life had been still more adventurous, and entitled him to a place of distinguished elevation amongst the heroes of ancient *romant*.

He had, at various intervals, made the circuit of the *habitable*, or rather *discoverable* globe, had lived for months amongst the natives of the South Sea islands, and was within an inch of becoming a true Anthropophaginian.

Nay, he had gone so far as to taste the sweets of conjugal felicity in the person of Tahiti Poweher, the renowned princess of the "Canine Island," whose skin of varnished mahogany bore the most honourable tokens of the tatoo's harrowing teeth; who carried away the chief spoils in every predatory excursion; whose arrow was the fleetest

in the battle; and who was universally allowed to be the best judge of human flesh within the compass of eighty leagues; an accumulation of accomplishments rarely to be found in one who had not yet numbered two hundred moons.

The happiness which the then commodore enjoyed in the possession of such a paragon, like all sublunary bliss, was doomed to prove of short duration.

The sight of an European vessel ploughing the rough billows at a formidable distance put all his conjugal duties to flight, and kindled resolutions of a very ungallant nature.

He instantly hoisted a flag of distress, and watched with emotions of nervous anxiety the progress of the floundering ship, as, driven by contrary winds, she kept on her perverse track, in spite of nautical skill and address, till, by gaining an inch upon every rough encounter, her baffled commander came to a more accurate vision of the commodore's tattered under-garment.

The singular display of such an elegant specimen of civilization on so savage a coast naturally suggested the idea of a shipwrecked mariner;

therefore, leaving the truant vessel to take her own course, Don Antonio Reveyro, who commanded a Brazilian galleon in the service of the Portuguese, wisely resolved to put ashore.

Bésides thè prospect of relieving a fellow-creature from distress, (an act of piety, which his breviary assured him would cover a multitude of sins,) he had lately discovered a mutineering spirit amongst his crew.

This evil, change of scene might dissipate, or at least afford him a chance of escaping from its disagreeable consequences by leaving the ring-leaders on shore.

Accordingly, to the commodore's great joy, who, in his excess of delirium, outdid the usual exclamations on such interesting occasions, the vessel anchored in a small bay of the island, and soon afterwards accents more familiar than those to which he had been lately accustomed, saluted his grateful ears.

The inhabitant of polished cities, whose refined tastes and luxurious habits are officiously anticipated by the ministering hand of art and science, would be totally at a loss to account for the trans-

ports of our hero, as he greeted his new companions.

His eye had not been so long inured to the physiognomical deformities of the savage race around him, as not to hail with delight a fairer sample of the "human face divine."

On the contrary, the clumsy figures and swarthy complexions of the Portuguese sailors, vied, in comparison, with the finest models of antiquity; nor had the poor commodore evinced half so idolatrous an admiration for the ruins of Athens, as he now displayed towards the coarse, but animated forms before him.

In truth, his stately brother, the noble baron, with his buckram suit of punctilio, would have been sorely put to the blush at the very undignified deportment of his degenerate kinsman.

Grasping the rough hands of the weather-beaten sailors, in succession, with a tremendous shake, the commodore next threw up his ragged hat into the air, with loud huzzas, then stuck it on the back of his head, danced, laughed and cried by turns, not to mention a rather ungentle embrace inflicted upon his corpulency the commander.

By degrees, however, he recovered his self-possession, and, after a string of broken sentences in various European languages, a good understanding commenced between himself and Don Antonio, who announced his commission and bearing, gave him some home news of rather an ancient date, and offered to land the commodore safely upon one of the Spanish settlements, from whence he could easily take shipping for England.

The latter now began to exercise the rites of hospitality, and as his Amazon bride was upon an excursion of pleasure some leagues distance, he deemed it a most favourable opportunity to make his exit.

All matters promised fair: a prosperous gale sprung up; the wearied and discontented sailors, refreshed by rest and nourishment, had returned with invigorated spirits to their duty, when the commodore, after leaving a few trinkets and beads, as a valedictory offering to his deserted princess, bade adieu to his solitary dominions.

The wind continued favourable for some weeks, when unfortunately, as they were within a few

days' sail of the destined port, a fierce hurricane arose, which, after tossing the ship about in all directions like a foot-ball, settled into a dead calm.

Added to this, the provender grew scant; and the men, who, during the continuance of the commodore's ample supplies, had been very civil and reasonable, now began to show symptoms of a very alarming nature.

The vessel, like a huge sea monster, lay motionless upon the stagnant waves, beneath a smothering atmosphere, withering and paralysing as the simoom of the desert!

Famine had already begun its work of terror amongst the crew. A character of savage ferocity was stamped upon their meagre visages and glaring eyeballs!

In an instant they seized their unfortunate commander, whilst, in the fury of demoniacal possession they murdered him before the commodore's sight, and feasted horribly upon his mangled remains!

No better fate remained in reserve for his companion; and as this mode of execution and critical

dissection was not at all to his mind, he resolved to put himself at the mercy of the waves.

Flinging an empty cask into the sea, he threw himself after it, and seating himself in his new berth, floated at a little distance from the ship, at the risk of immediate detection.

He remained all night in the same situation, dreading the morning's dawn, when, fortunately, a brisk gale blew up, which wafted his frail bark along with great rapidity, and in an opposite direction.

For two whole days and nights did the poor commodore float on the dreary deep alone, subsisting upon a single biscuit!

At length he was picked up by a Dutch vessel bound to the Cape of Good Hope, and after a series of tiresome adventures, found himself at anchor in the river Thames.

Friendless and penniless, the unfortunate commodore promenaded the streets of London, a most deplorable spectacle of wretchedness, carrying upon his person the tattered remnants of a wardrobe, to which every nation under the sun appeared to have contributed.

Instinct, or affection, or Providence, whichever the reader please, (though I consider the two former as the legitimate agents of the latter,) led him to that quarter of the city inhabited by the nobility and gentry during their annual visitations.

It was a dreary evening in November, when he reached the Earl of Antrim's splendid residence. Years had rolled away in quick succession since he had beheld the favourite sister of his youth; but neither time, change of scene, nor varying circumstances, had obliterated her loved image from his memory.

All his prejudices in favour of the national faith, as well as the melting tenderness interwoven in his rough nature, took their rise at one particular period of his life, and, being attached to his remembrance by the most pleasing associations, were never uprooted by time or accident.

From his childhood, it had been the custom of his mother, the venerable baroness, to gather her circling offspring around her high-backed chair every Sunday evening, for the purpose of hearing them repeat certain sentences of Holy Writ, a

catechetical form of divinity, or a selection from the sacred poems of the "divine Herbert."

Robert, whose memory generally proved treacherous at the precise moment when it was most needed, too often gained a severe reprimand, and not only came away unrewarded, but acquired the mortifying appellation of a "Dulberd."

On such occasions the tender-hearted Gertrude, whose prompting efforts were strictly forbidden by the solemn commands of the old baroness, would quietly steal to his side, clasp her gentle hand in his, and depositing her lawful gains in his palm, would softly whisper, "You can spend it, Robert, and I can't."

How often is it the fate of the high-minded and generous to sigh over the sterility which repays their lavish bounty! yet, like the vital rays and showers of heaven descending equally "upon the just and unjust," it may fall upon some hidden spot on the earthly soil, whose fertility may return the gift "an hundred fold."

Little did the simple and affectionate Gertrude calculate upon the rich interest accumulating upon her freewill offering.

The portionless daughter of a noble house—her beauty and merit nevertheless attracted numerous suitors, and when her choice fell upon one of distinguished rank, the generous sailor insisted upon paying down a dowry somewhat adequate to her rank, out of his own private purse.

It was at the house of this loved relative the shipwrecked adventurer now stood.

The fog was growing intense and chilly, and the lamps cast a sickly, hazy glare; but as the commodore passed under the archway which shaded a large flight of steps, the flashing of lights, the unusual bustle, the sound of music, and the ringing of bells, announced some uncommon festivity.

Timidly raising the knocker, its loud reverberation sent back a strange feeling to his heart.

“My life for ’t,” thought the sailor, with a half sigh, “they’ll take me for a beggar;” and with a novel feeling of mistrust, he surveyed himself more closely by the passage-lamp.

The scrutiny was not very favourable to his vanity; for the independent sailor had invariably

selected the worst articles offered to his acceptance at the different ports he had entered.

Slouching his hat over his sun-burnt face, he once more grasped the knocker, and in a sudden pique, gave a thundering peal.

The powdered footman instantly obeyed the summons, gave a broad stare, cursed him for an "impudent rascal," and shut the door in his face.

Discomfited by this reception, the poor wanderer stood for a moment irresolute and helpless—a stranger in his own country, from which he had been so long exiled, famishing in the midst of plenty, and without the necessary means of hiring a conveyance to any other place.

He luckily remembered that a tradesman, employed by the family, lived at no great distance.

To this person he repaired, who, after being assured of his identity, accompanied him to the house from whence he had been so recently dismissed, and with the proffer of a handsome bribe, induced the pampered menials to procure him an audience with their mistress.

The countess was easily satisfied that the poor

outcast was her dear brother, whom she had long mourned as an inhabitant of another world.

In the warmth of her enthusiasm, she flew like lightning down the grand staircase, rushed by the crowd of lacqueys in the hall, and was detected in the strange act of hugging the forlorn mendicant to her bosom, as a large party of fashionable guests were descending from their glittering equipages to grace her sumptuous banquet.

The scene was now changed in the commodore's favour, who, after a few hours' rest, and arrayed in a garb more suitable to his rank, mingled in the gay society as one of its most distinguished members.

I have been writing a longer history of Admiral de la Fontayne than I at first intended.

It is one, I confess, upon which my mind loves to dwell, because it consoles me by presenting a fairer picture of human nature, under circumstances adverse to its creation, than it has been my lot to behold in my short pilgrimage.

Such a character also, in a more general sense, reflects credit on the noble profession to which he belonged, and proves that the rough habits of a

sailor's life are not incompatible with the softer graces of delicacy and feeling.

I could say more, but I have been already detained too long from the remaining members of the family by a lingering partiality towards one, whose modest worth was studiously concealed from the prying eye of idle curiosity, or the superficial glance of inanity.

The baron, who was a model of the old school, is described in a very few words.

He comes under the general classification of a particular species, now almost extinct, but which, up to the present century, included within its frigid limits the majority of our English nobility and gentry.

He was a nice judge of etiquette, an accurate observer of forms, a complete adept in the delicate art of adjusting the complicated machinery of courtly ceremonial.

He knew, by intuition, what degree of superiority ought to be accorded in the most intricate question of dubious claims, be they ever so difficult of arrangement. It would have been strange, indeed, had the pompous old gentleman failed in

an accomplishment which had cost him the mental labour of a life !

I must do him the justice, however, to say, that he did not (like too many of our fine gentry) measure the understanding and merit of his neighbours by his own aristocratical graduating scale.

He was kind, generous, and social in domestic life—nay, rather inclined to loquacity towards his favourites of an inferior life.

“ Young life and low life,” he would say, “ give you what no other class of beings are licensed to vend—the truth.”

The baron had been in his youth a courtier ; in his middle age, a soldier ; and in his latter days became a good landlord, an excellent master, and a conscientious ruler of an obedient household.

All these estimable qualities were inherited by John, his second son, who had lately been appointed to an office of dignity in Ireland, and who was now absent on the duties of his new calling.

Philip, the eldest son, who bore a colonel's commission in the king's guards, was so completely absorbed in the pleasures of a licentious

court, and so much infected by the mania of court gallantry, that it would be difficult to draw his exact portrait, amongst such an uniformity of originals; and equally ungenerous to stigmatise him for not discovering qualities which were growing rapidly into disrepute in the higher circles.

Philip had not a mind strong enough to stem the torrent of prevailing manners.

He found it the safest and easiest way to swim with the tide; and as virtue was out of fashion at court, he chose to out-Herod Herod, by all kinds of outrageous excesses.

These follies, added to his impetuous temper, were plentiful sources of regret to the good baron, who was often heard to sigh over the degeneracy of modern times, and particularly to lament that conjugal fidelity should receive so little countenance or support.

“It was not the case,” he would observe, “in my day, when I was chief almoner at Whitehall, and the king, our gracious master, (honoured be his memory!) laying aside the cumbrous forms of state, would be so gentle and obliging in his carriage, and withal so dignified in his princely

demeanour, that all persons, of whatsoever rank or persuasion, would feel their hearts most wonderfully knit towards him in all dutiful and submissive reverence.

“ Ah !” said the good old baron, “ he was true to his first love ; and sure never was there such a pattern-piece of comeliness and fair proportions as his lovely and beloved princess when she first landed in the British dominions. Yes, Baby Charles, as his father was wont to call him, had no other will than that of his lovely consort. And a fairer sight could never be seen than when the dear, precious royal infants, after sporting and frolicking about his knees, would, at one signal of his hands, cease their merry pranks, and kneel down in turn to receive the parental benediction.”

At these recollections involuntary tears would course down the time-worn channels of the baron’s rugged features, and choking thoughts impede his utterance ; for here the brief history of royal happiness ended.

Memory, that too faithful treasurer of our sorrows, rudely reversed the picture, and gave back the headless trunk of his murdered sovereign, the

widowed desolation of his bereaved consort, and the outlawed condition of his persecuted offspring!

These bitter remembrances awakened others of a more irritating kind, which naturally followed in their train.

The baron, who had been an impatient spectator of what he used emphatically to style "The age of misrule and foul-breasted hypocrisy," retained, even in advanced age, sparks of righteous indignation, more than sufficient to ignite the combustible materials collecting for so many years.

At these times he has been known to forget the excruciating torture of his gouty toe, in a violent impulse to ring the bell; which impetuous summons was always answered by Frank himself, and not (as would now be the custom) by Master Frank's deputy.

"Francis," said the old gentleman, vainly endeavouring to calm his ruffled temper into a more dignified deportment, "reach me a fire-screen; there's a fire big enough to roast all the king's murderers; only, praised be Heaven, they're in a hotter place by this time!"

So saying, he gave the embroidered screen a quick jerk, which sent it sprawling across the hearth, putting an end to all decorous resolutions.

The baron roared out a curse at the inanimate offender, as he cried out pettishly to the steward, "Can't ye pick it up, man? How can I stir a finger with this confounded gout?"

Francis, meantime, with strange apprehensive looks at the acidulous crimson visage of the angry baron, whose fretfulness increased with the attention it excited, now felt confirmed in his first suspicions, that his master's old enemy, the gout, had scaled the ladder of promotion, leaving his heels, to attack his head.

"Francis, my good fellow," said the baron, after a few minutes' pause, "doubtless thou art aggrieved to see me thus; but thou hast served with me many a year, and thou canst witness my faithful allegiance to the house of Stuart, together with my abhorrence of those sacrilegious wretches who dared to stretch forth their hands against the Lord's anointed. My warm blood curdles at the thought, Francis Lenthal. I abhor

and detest the very name of these accursed hypocrites ; and if I deemed it possible that Norman manors could harbour a puritan, or support a canting house, by — but I 'd as soon forgive the tenants as I would take to my affections that graceless youth Walter, my esteemed brother Hubert's only child !”

These irritating remembrances were only to be allayed by an immediate assemblage of the whole household, for the purpose of hearing the pious homily “ On subjection to the higher powers,” the baron himself officiating as clerk.

With the Restoration succeeded a proportionate degree of exhilaration in the mind of the noble owner of Norman Abbey. Its hospitable doors flew open to receive whole troops of happy guests ; the sports of the field were renewed ; the noble stag was again driven from his peaceful woodlands to wage a desperate warfare ; the majestic hounds, followed by a body of expert horsemen, would chase the exhausted animal over the free range of an extensive but uncultivated forest, till, arrived at the borders of the smooth lake, he would suddenly evade the fury of his pursuers, by

plunging into the watery element, whilst, amidst deafening shouts of exultation, the panting victim of this inglorious victory would proudly rear his branching antlers, and shake the dripping waters from his smoking haunches, with the convulsive throes of expiring nature !

Walter de la Fontayne, who has been slightly alluded to as the early companion of his majesty, had been absent from Norman Abbey many years. He was, in fact, an exile from his native country, having embroiled himself in an affair of gallantry with a young Portuguese lady of distinction, who had also attracted the admiration of the prince.

It was even surmised by some, that the recollection of this ungrateful fair one had been a rankling thorn in the bosom of royalty, and that early associations induced his subsequent choice of a partner, from the same country, which gave birth to Blanche da Guerilla.

Be the supposition true or false, one thing is certain—the name of Sir Walter never passed his lips unaccompanied by strong marks of resentment ; and without entering into the merits of

the case, it became a matter of policy and honour in the Fontayne family to exclude their unfortunate but high-spirited relative from the family circle.

It is true the baron often sighed over the sad necessity which rendered it an imperious duty to sanction the deed of banishment against his orphan nephew: he yet bore it up with the air of a martyr, and transferred an additional portion of his vacant affections to his beautiful ward, Grace Macdonald. This young lady was the only child and heiress of Sir Hugh Macdonald, who had married for his first wife an acknowledged and goodly sprig of royalty. One daughter alone was the fruit of this union, whose birth caused the death of the unfortunate mother.

Sir Hugh remained a mourning widower for several years, but subsequently consoled himself by the choice of a new consort, whose sympathetic attentions were dispensed with, in the course of a few months, by the death of the worthy baronet, who evinced his warm gratitude for the authoress of his brief domestic enjoyments by the bequest of a handsome jointure.

His daughter was the sole heiress of his immense possessions, which were subject to the controul of her adopted parent till the period of her majority.

The widow of Sir Hugh Macdonald afterwards married Lord Fontayne, in whose large family she proved a most valuable acquisition.

Her young and lovely charge was destined to be the bride of Philip, the baron's eldest son; but it was observed that the young lady early discovered an independent mode of thinking, which argued no good to their well-concerted schemes.

Her perverse inclinations seemed directed into another channel, and like a froward child with a pack of cards, she only waited till the frail fabric should be reared to a presumptuous height, that she might have the greater triumph of annihilating it by a single breath.

How this matter was accomplished, when a series of fortunate casualties seemed to give the colonel an infinite advantage over his disgraced cousin Walter, shall be elucidated in a future page.

If the reader has not been sharing the slumbers of the poor dwarf, we will now return to the great hall of Fontainville, and resume the thread of our main history.

CHAPTER IV.

It rose—that chanted mournful strain,
Like some lone spirit's o'er the plain :
'Twas musical, but sadly sweet,
Such as when winds and harp-strings meet,
And take a long unmeasured tone
To mortal minstrelsy unknown.

SIEGE OF CORINTH.

THE sound of distant revelry pouring in from the opening doors, the roar of the contending elements without, the execrative greetings of the wanton domestics, passing and repassing in bustling importance, failed to arouse poor Andrew from his recumbent position.

Wearied out by a day of unusual toil and vexation, he continued to slumber on, till the great clock of the priory tolled out, in tiresome deliberation, the midnight hour.

He awoke, just as the last stroke was dying

away, in an ague-fit, and the wasting lamps only retained power to throw out upon the flooring the broad shadows of the gigantic figures, ranged in niches round the walls.

The flickering blaze of the unconsumed fuel cast a quivering light upon the large sweeping antlers over the chimney corner, yet no more than sufficient to make the remaining portion darkly visible.

A dead silence reigned for a few moments: Andrew rubbed his eyes, and slowly unclosing them, gave a wild stare around, yawning out in an under-tone—

“How quiet every thing seems all of a sudden! odds-bobkins though, the lamps are a'most out.”

In fact, the hurricane, which, for many preceding hours, had been raging like a whole caravan of hungry beasts of prey let loose upon the forest, had nearly exhausted its fury, and was quietly expiring upon the large drifts of snow on the frozen lake.

The dwarf put up his ear for an instant, whilst a singular expression flitted across his elfish

physiognomy. A low and indistinct murmuring crept upon the rising gale, and sweeping through the ruins of the choral arch, gradually swelled into an unearthly cadence, bursting away in fitful starts, as if the chords of some unseen minstrel had been rudely snapped by the jarring elements.

“That’s no good sign,” thought Andrew, not daring to trust his voice to the midnight ear. “Old Peter says it betokens death; an’ Mattie says the old crazy wall was moaning an’ sighing away for a full hour, when the Lady Elizabeth (of blessed memory!) went to her long home; an’ the old steward remembers how it tolled the passing-bell for my lord’s first wife when she lay a-dying. But I’ll go to Mattie this very moment, for I’m weary afeard o’ stayin’ any longer.”

Up jumped the frightened dwarf, taking a short cut through the cloisters, and running as fast as his legs could carry him, in order to avoid encountering any of the servants by the way.

The moon was in her meridian of splendour, and as he cast a timid glance into the inner court, his excited imagination transformed the snow-clad figures grouped in fantastic array round the cen-

tral fountain of the inner court, into as many visionary forms.

He soon reached the more ancient and ruinous part of the priory, which comprised a suite of detached apartments, forming the right wing of the building.

Abruptly lifting the latch of a gothic door, he entered the sanctum sanctorum of the old house-keeper, whom he was surprised to find out of her bed at this unseasonable hour, and fast asleep in her arm-chair before the dying embers.

Her two black weather-wise grimalkins were stretched upon the hearth with their backs to the fire, whilst the favourite "Bess," so called in honour of her revered mistress, was snugly seated upon her left shoulder, with her tail curled round her neck, and her forepaws lodged in the folds of her neatly plaited kerchief.

Andrew, who considered that his near relationship to the good lady warranted such an unceremonious intrusion, could not, at this grotesque sight, controul his waggish inclinations.

Stealing gently behind her chair, he twitched the cushion from her back, and retreating to an unsuspecting distance, exclaimed—

“Aunty! aunty! Solomon’s burnt his tail, an’ Meg left nothing but the beak o’ young mistress’s bulfinch in its cage yestermorn. Ah! an’ she’s cruelly vex’d about it too, for it used to whistle ‘Sir William Wallace,’ an’ ‘The Flow’rs o’ Bannockburn,’ as well as any Scotch piper wi’ their squeaking drones—it’s a shame to call it music.”

“Dinna clatter o’ things ye ken naething about,” replied the old woman, who after an absence of thirty years from the ‘Land o’ Cakes,’ retained such a predilection for her early acquired tongue, as made her cleave to it pertinaciously in defiance of absence, time, and the constant hearing of another dialect.

“Tush! tush! noisy callant,” said she, carefully opening her eyes, her bewildered faculties unable to comprehend more than Andrew’s contemptuous allusion to the national music of Scotland.

“I suld hae likit far mair than ae thing, my puir leddy hersel had heard ye; she wad hae—” here she stopped short, and applied her hand to her head, as if suffering from recent pain, yet unconscious of the cause.

“I dinna ken what ails me,” said she: “ye’ve

wakit me out o' the daintiest dream, an' yet I 'm sair grievit nou; aiblins there 's something aback o't.

“ I dreamit,” continued she, “ that Sir Walter himsel whispered gracious words i' my lug; an' sure eneugh our young leddy ca'd out ‘ Mattie’ three times; an' then she gav' ae sigh, mair likit a grane than ony think else; an' then I thought I heard something jingle on the floor; but it was naething whan I liftit it up, naething at a' but your fool's cap tumblit aff the shelf. ‘ So ye 're come thegither agen, bonnie bairns,’ said I; ‘ guid luck to ye! an' here 's a token forbye.’ So sayin', I tuk a horse-shoe I pickit up ane day by the braeside, an' flingit it ahint 'em. The gude sauve 'em fra scaith or wrang! it made as big a noise as ony fourfooted beast. I 'm na that weel pleasit whan I bethink mysel it 's na true story, for the mid-hour is passit, an' mornin' dreams, ye ken, gang contrairewise.”

“ But your dream may come to pass for all that,” returned Andrew, with a mysterious look. “ It 's not far off, neither.”

“ Na ! na ! ” replied Mattie, without heeding him, “ it ’s muckle too gude to last ; it a’ passit in the twinkling o’ my ee.

“ I wuss it wad turn out a true tale :—but, Andrew, lad, my mind misgies me sair, as gin I had seen a warlock.”

“ Why,” returned the dwarf, carelessly, “ if you mean our young leddy, I ’ll be whipt if she was not flesh and blood this very night, for she called me to the first landing and asked me if one Sir Harry *something* was coming. Poor lady ! her eyes looked red, as if she ’d been crying.”

“ Well-a-day ! ohon ! ” said the ex-housekeeper pitifully, “ she ’s a winsome creature, an’ it’s like eneugh she ’s sair bested, her heart gaun ane gait, an’ her duty anither. It might hae bin as weel, aiblins, gin the colonel an’ she had made a match on’t : but suppose the puir lassie didna fancy him, where ’s the harm ? true love winna be crossit for lang, an’ Sir Walter’s sown his wild aits, I dare tak’ an aith on’t by this time.”

“ But, aunt,” inquired Andrew, “ how happens it that you ’ve never been abed ?”

“ Eh ! bairn, the storm was o’er blusterin’ to mak’ a bodie settle down to a quiet neeght’s rest ; so I sat up, thinkin’ o’ auld lang syne, till the wind sunkit, an’ than I was fairly knockit up. Heigho !” said Mattie, heaving a deep sigh, I dinna wonner my puir head suld rin after Miss Grace. The dear soul cam’ to me yester-noon lookin’ so wan an’ melancholias. ‘ Mattie,’ said she, did ye ever ken ony thing about the green-room ?’ I wot she had heard some o’ the clashes about ghaists, sae I wadna tak’ her real sense, and I answered, ‘ Strange indeed wad it be, my leddy, ’gin I wa’ to forget the very room whar the king (God bless him !) was keepit lockit up whan the rebels laid siege to the auld priory :—there are double doors, ye ken an’ the inner door opens thro’ the wain-scoatting, sae that nae strange bodie wad fand it out. I wot, I didna say that the baron’s first leddy drew her last breath in that room, or that I hae seen what I suldna wuss to see

again. Weel, my young leddy lookit muckle thoughtfu', sae I meant to cheer her by sayin' ' I suppose we sall hæ ye at the priory ategither now, my leddy.' At this she starit, an' fixit her bright een upon me as she wad ken e'ery thought i' my head :—' Ha !' said I, ' no offence, dear.' Here I stoppit ; for the life o' me I couldna frame my tongue to speak my mind : there 's something about her, young as she is, that 's quite awsome, whan she isna pleasit. ' My good Mattie,' said she, wi' muckle gravity, ' it is neither wise nor profitable to heed idle discourse, an' it is mair fittin' in ye to discourage sic clavers than to repeat them.' Wi' that, she drew hersel up as stately as a queen. Ye maun ken, I was sair fashed, and didna speer ae question about Sir Walter, for I guessit weel how matters lay :—na, na, the colonel may woo an' wed a southron, he winna warm Scotch bluid, I trow."

" But Sir Walter married, they say, in foreign parts," returned Andrew.

" Ay ; he may be wed an' unwed for aught I care," returned Mattie disdainfully ; " he does-

na deserve a thought after a 's said an' done: he 's but a black sheep i' the true flock, plightin' his troth to ane an' joinin' hands wi' anither. I dinna think it strange at a'," mused the old woman, "that I suld ken my young leddy in my dream:—but, och! Sir Walter—I hae na seen *him* mony a lang year."

"Ranger could bring you news of him, though," replied Andrew, "for he saw and owned him not many hours ago."

Mattie gave an incredulous stare.

"It's true—true as I sit here," continued the dwarf, who was squat on a stool by her side. "If Sir Walter did not cross his uncle's threshold this very night, I'm not a living soul."

"Ye're a ram-stam gilpy," replied Mattie: "what for suld Walter de la Fontayne seek the hall of his forefathers? Kens he not that if Miss Grace was not betrothed to anither, an' he was free to choose again, she is muckle too proud to forgie the past? Scotch lassies are na won o' that gait. Couldna he wait for her langer nor sae; but he maun gang awa' in a carfuffle an' tak' a stranger to 's bosom! Na, na, my young leddy winna get

o'er that in a blink ; she's her father's spirit, an 's a true Highlander at the heart. She—tak' up wi' ony body's orts? I tell you na," said the old woman, with a stronger Caledonian accent, " the best bluid o' Scotland winna brook sic a slight, an' a Macdonald wad aye scorn a *light o' love.*"

" Why, Mattie," said the dwarf, fixing his twinkling eyes upon the speaker, " you did not think so just now, when you talked of true love and all that."

" Eh, bairn," said Mattie in a relenting tone, " I didna mind ae thing ; but the gude days I hae passit whan Sir Walter usit to spend his holidays at the Abbey:—but thae times are gane:" and she heaved a sigh to their memory.

" But I tell ye," returned Andrew, " he *is* at the priory this very moment."

" Dinna tell ony lees, bairn," said Mattie, shaking her head reproachfully.

" I 'll swear to 't," cried the dwarf, in a voice between anger and sullenness. " It was no dream o' mine, that I saw Sir Walter pass through the

hall, not many hours ago; if it was n't so, Ranger 's a fool of a whelp, or I 'm bewitch'd—one."

"Haud your tongue, Andrew," replied Mattie, as she groped about for a tinder-box, and struck a light; "this is ane o' your daft tricks; but ye suld na tell lees."

"What 's that shining on the floor?" cried Andrew, as the light fell upon some glittering object in the middle of the room. "Gibbet me! if it is n't a purse of gold! O now," said he, putting his finger to his mouth, as if to recall some distant idea, "I have it—where could this luck-penny come from but Sir Walter, I 'd like to know? the baron 's turning all his cash into roast beef an' plum-pudding: he 's no gold to fling, at a venture, that 's sartain; so it must be a Christmas-box from Sir Walter, you see, Mattie: you 'll believe me now, I take it. Bobs an' butter cakes!" said he, clapping his hands to his side, and bursting into a shrill laugh, "this is my fool's cap tumbling off the shelf! I wish I could find it lined with as many doublons as *this*," shaking the well-filled purse.

“ Heaven bless him, an’ sauve him for ever !” cried the old woman, struck with amazement at this tacit confirmation of Andrew’s asseverations ; “ he had aye a noble heart. I hae wranged ye, bairn ; ye maunna think about it at a’ :—but whisht ! whisht !” cried she, with a look of intense anxiety, as the distant rumbling of a carriage broke the deep stillness of midnight. “ Wha ’s stirrin’ at this hour o’ the morn ? It ’s muckle, early for Giles an’ his team to be asteer. Gang awa’, lad, to the servants’ hall an’ see what they ’re daen ; it ’s somethin’ mair than common I ’m thinkin’.”

When Andrew reached the other end of the priory, he found it a scene of the most incomprehensible confusion ; the servants running in all directions ; the dispersed guests in their fantastic garbs, wandering over the deserted apartments in the most desolate air imaginable ; the ladies were shrieking, and fainting upon the gentlemen’s shoulders ; and all seemed agitated by some violent calamity, as unexpected and unwelcome, as the shock of an earthquake, or the explosion of a mine.

“ Seize the murderer !” cried one. “ Arrest him in the name of the king !” exclaimed another. “ Who could have dreamt such a thing ?” said a third, more unconcernedly. “ The villain made a home-thrust, though.”—“ The poor baron !” said a female domestic, as the servants crowded to the scene of tumult.

“ Alack ! alack !” cried the venerable Francis, shaking his silver locks wofully, “ my good master ! This is worse than all ! Murder an’ bloodshed I’ve seen under this roof, but it was the blood of traitors an’ rebels ! Never did I think to see my master’s house wi’ the foul stain o’ manslaughter upon it ! My lord ’s seen heavy tribulations in his day, but this caps all ! Now will his grey hairs go down wi’ sorrow to the grave !”

“ Ah !” said Mistress Margery, (her first chill of alarm succeeded by boiling anger at the foul assassin of Colonel Fontayne,) “ the viper ’s been warmed in his bosom, an’ now he ’s put forth his sting. A pretty Sir Harry, indeed ! I ’d Sir Harry him if I was my lord, though ; I ’d pay him off with a vengeance.”

“ His servant went away a long time ago,” put

in Ralph, half stupified with amazement, "for I let him out at the hall-door."

"An' I 'll swear," whispered Maurice to Jenny, the young lady's abigail, "that I saw both master an' servant together just now, an' the poor lad's cheek was purely bleached by the cold."

Jenny's frightened looks betrayed that she knew more of the matter than she chose to avow; but it was not till long after dawn, when every hole and corner of the Abbey had been searched, and Jenny herself found to be missing, that it was even suspected the strange cavalier had not gone away empty handed.

How this matter came to pass, and by what magic the prudery of the young heiress as well as Mattie's prognostics, were overruled, shall be detailed in the next chapter.

Having led my readers, by slow and easy stages, up the grand staircase, my narrative brings them at length to the threshold of the banqueting room, where the numerous and noble guests, who had graciously condescended to receive the overflowing hospitalities of Norman Abbey, had been previously assembled. With all due deference they

are now summoned to join this gay circle as invisible spirits of the air; that privileged race, to whom the visible world and its appendages are most romantically unveiled.

CHAPTER V.

He, who the sword of Heav'n would bear,
 Should be as holy as severe ;
 Pattern in himself, to know,
 Grace to stand, and virtue go.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

Here dons, grandees, but chiefly dames, abound,
 Skill'd in the ogle of a roguish eye,
 Yet ever well inclin'd to heal the wound ;
 None through their cold disdain are doom'd to die,
 As moon-struck bards complain, by love's sad archery.

CHILDE HAROLD.

THE great room at Norman Abbey, at the close of the year 1662, exhibited a blaze of splendour and magnificence, to which it had been long unaccustomed.

The stern rulers of a republican government, who marked with a jealous eye every approaching

innovation on the primitive simplicity they affected to introduce, had gone so far as to direct their righteous indignation against the decorations of the female person.

Nothing could more strongly evince the overweening confidence of these arrogant usurpers, than an attempt to invade the long conceded rights of the petticoat community, or to establish an universality of opinion on a subject of individual importance.

But the strong arm of power ruled the rod of despotic influence over the consciences of men, in the name of "rational freedom," whilst the current of free thought was arrested in its vagrant wanderings by wary, cunning politicians, and dexterously turned into the disputations and vexatious channel of hereditary supremacy.

Yet, notwithstanding their subtle contrivances to bend the multitude, their hard frame-work of civil and religious institutions was ill calculated to suit the expanding faculties of minds once let loose upon the wide field of investigation; and the men who had been hailed with all the enthusiasm due to bold and enterprising patriots, were

now detested as cold-blooded hypocrites, or interested speculators.

It is not to be wondered at, under such circumstances, that the sudden removal of an intolerable burden (galling and oppressive in the extreme, when imposed by the advocates of liberty) should be succeeded by an unbounded freedom and lightness of feeling; that liberty should degenerate into licentiousness, or the vices of men spring up with fresh vigour, when the close pressure was withdrawn which impeded their elasticity, without destroying their vitality.

Accordingly, there is no era in history which so fully develops that singular propensity to rush into opposite extremes, and that aversion to a state of "dull cold medium," peculiar to civilised life, as the fluctuating tide of human events during the seventeenth century.

Those who had formerly groaned under the heavy weight of sectarian forms, now ranged themselves beneath the banners of infidelity, or hastened to deliver up their consciences into the safe custody of the infallible church.

A sanctimonious exterior was soon found to be

no passport to royal favour ; and though the polite and conciliatory monarch had, by his early acts of clemency, abolished the odious distinctions of " Cavalier" and " Roundhead," he was well known to be secretly indisposed towards a sect, whose discipline had been of a very unpalatable nature. Charles, who had suffered much in his youth, was at first glad to compromise some portion of his shattered claims, by making larger concessions than agreeable ; but, no sooner was he firmly seated on the throne of his ancestors, than he paid off his enemies by every indirect species of obloquy and contemptuous neglect.

The long-forsaken empire of beauty, wit, and taste, revived beneath the genial smiles of the " Merry Monarch ;" and luxury, like a mighty magician, spell-bound for a limited number of years, burst its uneasy fetters, and exhausting the treasuries of distant nations, laid their rich spoils at his feet.

Under the influence of such a regal precedent, " lean and sallow abstinence" grew into disfavour amongst all degrees and conditions of his liege subjects ; and as the king himself, under

the impulse of native gaiety and early habits, loved to mingle promiscuously with the gay crowd, an unusual degree of magnificence was affected by his courtiers.

These changes contributed to render the present assemblage exceedingly brilliant and imposing. Neither cost nor labour had been spared to render the festivities of the evening somewhat equal to the baron's exalted notion of the respect due, even to majesty *incog.*, and his resources were as amply tasked in catering for the amusement of his illustrious guest, as they had heretofore been in manfully defending his rights.

The banqueting-room, whose excessive length appeared rather disproportionate to its breadth, was surmounted by a ceiling elegantly carved in masonry, from whence appended a profusion of dazzling lamps.

The beautiful wainscoting of polished oak, the growth of the neighbouring forest, was divided into pannels, the intermediate columns of which were sculptured in a rich pattern of oak foliage, whilst the spaces were occupied by a range of family portraits, except the central compartments,

which enclosed, on each of the three sides of the room, superbly gilt and massive mirrors, giving back in numberless incarnations the same sportive and dazzling images. On the summit of these crystal handmaids to beauty glittered the pomp and pride of heraldry, crowned by a resplendent wreath of full-blown roses, entwined with verdant laurel and choice evergreens.

This last-mentioned decoration had been the united labours of the female part of the household; the spinsters of that antediluvian period being expert semstresses, clever housewives, and ingenious manufacturers of embroidered quilts, pointed ruffles, falling collars, and painted flowers, together with a whole cargo of time-consuming *et ceteras*.

On each side of the marbled supporters to the chimney-frame rose the heads of the twelve Cæsars in beautiful fresco, whilst the glowing beams of the aromatic roots, plentifully heaped upon the wide polished range, threw an artificial lustre upon the faded portrait which hung near the mantlepiece, and which represented the founder of the family, clad in a cumbrous suit of

armour, and distinguished from the rest of the group by a prominent Roman nose and long peaked beard.

The remainder of the portraits displayed the usual variety. There was a handsome middle-aged man, in judicial robes and flowing wig; a venerable-looking head was crowned with a mitre; one of Sir Peter Lely's splendid beauties was caressing a tame hawk, perched upon the tip of her delicate finger; a little stiff red-haired child of four years' old, with a chalky complexion, and ridiculously attired in the costume of full-grown womanhood, was holding a waxen doll at arm's length.

The vacant space over the fireplace was entirely filled up by an oblong picture, garnished in a similar manner to the three mirrors.

The subject of this picture was elucidatory of the hunting scene, to which we have before alluded; and the whole family party were lugged in, to form an interesting *tout ensemble*. There were horsemen and horsewomen, in full gallop; boys and girls watching the sport with eager curiosity, from the open court of the Abbey,

whose gothic architecture was elegantly relieved by the blue surface of a clear sky, and the variegated masses of autumnal verdure peeping through the ruins. The very babe seemed to spring out of its nurse's arms in ecstasy; the deep-mouthed hounds were in full cry at the edge of the lake; some were already up to the neck in water, whilst the more timorous had their gloating eyes steadily fixed upon their noble prey, whose lofty antlers alone were visible.

It had been the artist's original intention to have placed, as foremost in the group, a lady dressed in scarlet uniform and towering plumes, reining in, with much dexterity, the impatient movements of her milk-white palfrey.

Alas, for human endeavours! The limners of those days, it would seem, were not such adepts in composition faces as they appear to be at present; and the partial excellence of some copyists may have arisen from the vast superiority of the originals. In many instances, the acknowledged caprice of the sex, by its exorbitant demands upon the patience of the artist, might paralyse the genius which should have guided

the mere imitative pencil, leaving to a future generation the noble faculty of throwing around the commonest forms of nature a lustrous halo of imaginative beauty !

The present design was a melancholy proof, that even talent of the highest description had failed in its devotions to the shrine of female vanity.

The artist (whose name and eminence were announced by the scalloped ruffs and black snub-nosed curly-haired spaniels, frisking around the feet of the junior branches) had lost all patience with his fair task-mistress, and, with the wilfulness of a privileged favourite, had enveloped the figure of the fair equestrian in a dark thunder-cloud.

The horse remained, but the rider lay under a shade ; whilst the young and witty lady, when she had recovered from her chagrin, was wont to entertain her brilliant coteries by protesting that the next "revelation" of her charms should not be the "Vision of Death on the pale Horse."

Alas ! how little, at that moment, could the laughing audience deem, that a few short years

would render this frolic touch of the pencil a serious emblem of one whose beauty, talents, and rank, were doomed to be wrapped, by the cold hand of death, in the shadowy mantle of the grave!

The strange cavalier, as he entered, gave a hurried glance at the pictures, till his eye rested upon an aerial figure, partially enveloped in a floating drapery of clouds, whose countenance of blended sweetness and grace received additional dignity from the pale crescent diadem which confined her waving tresses.

Turning away from the lovely vision, his eye shot through the gay crowd, in hopes of encountering the fair original. The slippery oak floor was chalked over in various devices, offering a safe conduct to the delicate feet whose elastic movements scarcely pressed its shining surface.

The dull and stately minuet was succeeded by the light tasteful saraband; and the "winged Hours," rudely depicted on the floor, quickly faded before the persevering efforts of some masks in the Highland costume.

The regards of the cavalier seemed riveted to

the spot; but whether from curiosity to watch the demolition of the chalk scenery, or from some peculiar absorption of feeling, was a matter of perfect indifference to the votaries of the nimble-footed Muse, whose concentrated vigour, both of soul and body, seemed directed towards the immediate pursuit of pleasure, through the evolutions of the mazy dance.

“ Who is that dismal-looking mask ? ” inquired one of the fair guests, to a diminutive Rinaldo by her side.

“ Don’t you know ? ” returned the other, with a tone of surprise ; “ I thought every body knew the Favourite’s favourite.”

“ How should I your true love know
From any other man ? ”

exclaimed the pastoral nymph, with an air of sickly affectation ; “ that odious garb may conceal the apparition of the Protector, for aught I know. I vow it makes me shudder.”

“ Who talks of fear in the presence of so valiant a knight ? ” exclaimed a gigantic Algerine pirate sarcastically.

“ We were discoursing about Sir Harry Bennet,” returned the lady.

“ Sir Harry ! what ! is he come back from Portugal ? I wonder if the treaty be concluded to the satisfaction, as they say, of both parties.”

“ What treaty ?” inquired the inquisitive shepherdess.

“ The marriage contract between his majesty and the princess of Portugal ; it’s no secret at court, every body knows.”

“ How will the Favourite relish the alliance ?”

“ O ! she knows it to be only a matter of state policy. A wife is a dumb partner on some occasions. The mistress keeps the play cards in her own hands.”

As this conversation passed the cavalier drew towards the upper end of the room, with a bolder step, till an exclamation, at no very great distance, surprised him out of his self-possession, and produced a startling effect upon his nerves.

“ St. Dominick and his legion of furies seize me,” said the speaker, “ if our trusty and well-beloved envoy hath not forsaken the civil, for the ecclesiastical court, under the patronage of a tri-

bunal, which anticipates the torments of the damned! Marry," continued he, with a significant shrug, "I know not which of his satanic majesty's counsellors I would choose for that special purpose; his infernal excellency, the inquisitor, or a committee of Scotch presbyters, hatching their accursed plots at a kirk-session. What says my fair princess?" inquired the speaker, thoughtlessly appealing by a familiar tap on the shoulder, to the lady at his side. A quick blush and angry frown, passed rapidly over a countenance whose general character appeared that of habitual unruffled serenity.

"No offence, pretty Mistress Palmer," whispered her companion. "Expectest thou that thy charms should work miracles, or that a Puritan should talk sense, or a Roundhead act cavalierly?"

"Knowest thou not, that a believer, by virtue of a special diploma from the bountiful treasury of faith, is fain to discard the beggarly elements of the law, by which carnal souls are held in bondage.

"Mahomet has his houris, Bramah his wives, a Catholic his Madona; whilst I, who am a faith-

ful subject of the blind deity, here pay my votive offerings at a shrine of purest alabaster."

So saying, the mask, drawing a ring of costly brilliants from his own hand, passed the circling charm over the middle finger of the lady, whose haughty features, altogether unmoved by his satirical speech, accompanied by an appropriate snuffling whine, now began to relax into radiant smiles under the influence of the sparkling gift, and its prefatory string of compliments. A slight pressure of the fair and tapering hand, as the donor gallantly raised it to his lips, completed the enchantment.

"That costly piece of frailty hath received the royal signet of approbation," said an astrologer in the ear of the watchful inquisitor.

"'Tis a pretty automaton at present; but my art fails me, if it doth not prove a dangerous machine when once set a-going."

At these words the regards of the cavalier were directed with more curiosity towards the court favourite.

This lady, whose subsequent elevation to a ducal coronet, added to her personal charms and imperious temper, had given her a disgraceful

pre-eminence in the list of meretricious counselors, was now in the meridian of her attractions. The full court-dress, which she wore on this eventful evening, was well calculated to display those charms to the greatest possible advantage.

A mantua of rich crimson brocade, whose embossed flowers were intermingled with threads of gold, fell in ample folds at her feet, whilst the formality of the tight boddice, fitted with scrupulous exactness to the extreme point of a delicate waist, was relieved by a loose drapery of gossamer texture, which, passing underneath the massive scollops of the sleeve, was fastened on the left shoulder by a diamond clasp, partially shading a hand and arm—the sculptor and painter's *beau ideal* of tapering roundness.

Her light auburn hair was drawn back to disclose the clear expanse of her smooth forehead, leaving only a few light playful curls upon the surface, whilst the remaining portion was fastened at the crown of the head, and fell in rich clustering ringlets on her snowy bosom.

Pearls of rare quality, and in liberal profuseness, were carelessly strewn by the ingenious hand

of art upon her golden tresses ; whilst a pair of immense diamond pendants trembled in each ear, of transparent delicacy.

The lady, however, it seems, was an adept in the mysteries of the toilet, as not a single thread of artificial lustre was permitted to break the fine contour of her exquisite throat.

The face of her companion inclined towards her own, with a degree of earnestness which prevented both from observing the keen scrutiny they invited. The drooping of her languishing eye revealed the tender nature of his discourse, whilst the deep fulness of its transparent lid, and the perfect arch of the pencilled eyebrow, were shadowed forth with greater delicacy, giving a new and more interesting character to her beauty.

“ Look at that pattern-piece of starched propriety ! ” said an Armenian Jew, pointing to the discreet Mistress Ruth, the wife of the baron’s second son. “ What a confounded shame it is those cursed Irish rebels should hold my precious brother in durance vile ! the good sober folk would be much more at home, stuck up side by side under a glass cover, than condemned to perform

separate functions, for which nature has incapacitated them."

"Why, then," replied a court jester, who was no other than the gay, witty, and profligate Buckingham, "wherefore dost thou not, of thine own freewill and bounty, bestow upon us a mistress more fitted to do the honours of the old Abbey—eh, Phil? Hast thou no relish for a nearer contact with thy Scotch neighbours? or art thou already infected with a certain cutaneous malady, which shall be nameless? Off wi' ye, man!" continued the voluble speaker, with a ludicrous expression of disgust, "there's contagion in the very touch o' thee!—But stay, Phil, art thou to do penance for past transgressions, before thou canst be received into the bosom of the visible church, which I take to be a sanctuary as likely to be rifled for the sake of its vessels of gold and of silver, as for its outward endowments."

"Nay, nay, Georgy, thou'rt too severe," whispered the king: "decently fair for a woodnymph; rather piquant at times; but of too sublimated a cast for *my* taste," added he, in a higher tone, and glancing at the unconscious object.

“ True !” replied Philip with smartness, “ there can be no doubt, that if Grace Macdonald were to lose a hundredth part of her present charms, she would stand a less chance of verifying your sagacious observations ; although a *smaller* quantity of beauty, and a *lower* quality of bearing, would better indicate her high descent.”

“ Capitale ! capitale !” cried the offended prince, with admirable self-possession ; “ I did not give thee credit for so spirited a defence of thine inamorata ; much less deemed I, that thou wert capable of so set a speech. We must mend thy condition, friend, to suit thine hidden graces ; truly thou art a ‘ burning and a shining light,’ sadly overlooked in this perverse generation !

“ Am I indebted to thee, or to the sage Clarendon, for the newest edition of satires upon our royal qualifications ?”

“ No ! by the seal of King Solomon, my patron saint,” said the facetious Buckingham, gracefully bending on one knee, and doffing his glittering cap, with an air of mock solemnity, “ your majesty’s wisdom is for once mistaken ! Who ever dreamt an ounce of wit lodged in yonder caitiff’s

skull? By Jupiter! he hasn't enough to brain a gnat with; and yet he fancies, forsooth, that he must be one of the big blue-bottles buzzing disagreeable whispers into royal ears! It was your poor fool, sire, who maintained that your majesty never said a *foolish* thing, but when your majesty's wrath threatened to chastise your faithful slave; and that your majesty never did a *wise*—*r* thing, than when your majesty's clemency—let it alone."

"Oh, oh!" said the king, carelessly, affecting to credit the mock assertion. "Codsfish! we're come to the truth at last. And so this weighty, and vastly pithy speech, which will no doubt travel down to future generations, as a warning to all indiscreet sovereigns, was only a wild shoot of thine, Georgy! but I charge thee, idiot, prune thy luxuriances; there's many a true word spoken in jest; for my *words*, thou well knowest, pass through the channel of my own lips, whilst my *actions* find their way through those of my ministers."

At these words, the king turned upon his heel, and appeared to devote his whole attention to the

sprightly air which the musicians were playing at the other end of the room, continuing to beat time with exemplary patience and regularity; every now and then exclaiming rapturously; "Good! very good! codsfish! excellent for village scrapers! Bravo, old Catgut!" cried he, to the blind fiddler, (as ambitious an aspirant for fame as the leaders of the Westminster choir, though, unlike them, ignorant of the connoisseur's rank,) thou hast as accurate an ear as Baptiste Lully, and a better taste than Professor Williams; I'd advise thee to push thy fortunes at court, friend."

"He's blind, an' please your honour," said one of the performers.

"No worse for that, less sight more ear; 'twill mend his voice, like canary birds, that whistle the better for having their eyes put put!"

"Dost hear that?" said the man to the blind Orpheus, when the king was gone; "it's a nice look-out for thee, Davie; it's well to be born wi' a silver spoon i' one's mouth. By'r leddy! it 'ed bin a fine time afore I'd gotten sich luck. Oi wunder who it is now—some great lord or duke t'on?"

“ I don’t care whether he’s a lord or duke,” returned David conceitedly. “ I’d no more care playin’ afore the king his own sen than note. He is but a man after aw; an’ they say he loikes a bit o’ good music as well as ony lad or lass at a wake. Howsome’er this chap’s not much amiss for that; oi couldn’t see him, to be sure, but I heard him gi’ a grunt when thou mis’t hafe a bar, an’ th’ counter run a thought too flat.”

“ It’s a greet lie, now then, Davie; an’ if I hed thee downstairs, I’d gi’ thee a good threshing; it wor thysen as wor hafe a bar too fast, an’ thou mun lay it to me! Loo’ thee yonder,” said he, with a malicious grin, “ there’s thy fine friend laughing an’ makin’ faces as he pints to thee. He no but made gam’ on thee, when he ax’d thee to go to Lon’on.”

The rival performer never discovered the bull which his jealousy had elicited, till his eye caught the sightless orbs of David upturned, as he bent his head down to his instrument, to ascertain its correctness of tone, drawing his bow-string across with the confident air of a *dilettante*. The sight disarmed him instantly. “ Oi say,

Davie, man," resumed he, coaxingly, "thou mo'nt care about what I sed just now; I wor but in a passion; there's note as raises me loike hearin' folks brag o' their cleverness, I reckon it woss nor a cow drinkin' her own milk."

During all this time the inquisitor wandered about the room, apparently shunning observation, and without courting any amusement, till the near approach of the favourite obliged him to make a courteous inclination.

"You have never been near our circle to-night, Sir Harry," exclaimed the fair dame. "Are you a sworn foe to all innocent pleasures? or are the vows of your order, indeed, so rigorous, as to debar you from a single recreation?"

The cavalier felt himself suddenly placed in an awkward dilemma. Taking courage from necessity, he replied in a voice of suppressed agitation—"Beautiful Mistress Palmer! I throw myself on your mercy as a guilty culprit. I am neither a legalised scourge of the Holy Church, nor have I the still greater distinction of calling you my friend; but if, without inquiring my reasons, or mistrusting my honour, you will have the charity to be-

friend an unhappy, but not ignoble cavalier, you will bind me to your service for ever."

"What can I do for you?" inquired the favourite, with anxiety; strongly interested by the voice and manner of the speaker. "Command my services in any way you think proper."

"Then you will greatly oblige me," returned the inquisitor, "if you will introduce me to that lady, now standing near the young gentleman who has been so laboriously executing a Highland fling; and, furthermore, allow me, for once, to appear in the character of a friend, by retaining a name which has been affixed to me by chance."

"I can have no fear," returned the favourite, smiling graciously, "that treachery should lurk in that holy vestment; therefore, I will accompany you to the enchanted spot, to which I perceive your senses are already rooted; but I hope," added she, significantly, "as this temple of pleasure is also the court of Venus, you will only find it necessary to put the question *ordinary* to the fair offender."

The inquisitor seemed no way disposed to retort upon this raillery, but silently followed his

conductress to the upper end of the room. The lady, of whom they were in quest, was engaged in an animated conversation with an elegant youth—courtly, graceful, and high-born, as the princely star on his bosom denoted.

“That is the Duke of Monmouth,” whispered the favourite. The dialogue was suspended as they drew near, and the condescending grace of the young heiress replaced by an air of collected dignity, as she returned the courtesies of the favourite with a cold and measured formality, which forbade a nearer approach to familiarity.

“Fair Mistress Grace,” said the latter, in a voice of insinuating sweetness, “permit me to introduce to your notice my worthy and esteemed friend, Sir Harry Bennet, one of his majesty’s privy counsellors, and lately returned from a foreign mission, whose object is well known to you. You will find him most deserving the praiseworthy titles I have accorded him. May I trust you will grant him a portion of that favour which you are wont to bestow upon the worthy baron’s respected guests?”

“I only know Sir Harry by name,” returned

the young lady, more unreservedly; "but that is a sufficient claim upon my attention. My honoured parent will be happy to hear of his arrival: I will 'inform him this moment;" and she made a movement to that effect.

"Stay," cried the favourite, "the baron is engaged, and Sir Harry has a host of traveller's wonders to relate."

"Adieu!" said she, in a tone inaudible to the rest of the party—"Adieu! Sir Inquisitor—your secret is safe."

Passing her arm through that of the young duke, with consummate address, the favourite led the way to an adjoining room, where a profusion of delicate, as well as substantial viands were spread upon tables, over which was suspended a canopy of intermingled laurels, holly, ivy, and mistletoe. To this interesting study we leave the less intellectual part of the company, and attend to the more sentimental couple in the banqueting-room.

CHAPTER VI.

I find she loves him much, because she hides it.
Love teaches cunning, even to innocence,
And, where he gets possession, his first work
Is to dig deep within a heart, and there
Lie hid, and, like a miser in the dark,
To feast alone.

DRYDEN'S TEMPEST.

THE cavalier and his fair companion, left to the uninterrupted enjoyment of a social *tête-à-tête*, seemed in no haste to avail themselves of the unwonted privilege. They preserved, for the space of two long minutes, a profound silence. At length the tie was broken by the young lady, who, nevertheless, felt inwardly chagrined that so experienced a courtier should leave to herself the task of arranging the preliminary articles of discourse. After waiting in vain for the inquisitor

to commence, the lady appeared to consider it her duty to address a few words of a congratulatory nature to the recently arrived guest; but not acquitting herself at all to her own satisfaction, she stopped short in the midst of her harangue, and fell to diligent perusal of the winding sandals which decorated her slender ankle.

This occupation gave her companion full leisure to take a survey of her person; and, in truth, it was no bad study, either for a painter or a lover.

Grace Macdonald was just at that interesting period of life, when the budding graces of unformed womanhood are giving place to the expanding bloom of maturity. The strife was yet doubtful, and she might seem, to an imaginative eye, like some beautiful creation of the poet's fancy, hovering near the confines of two differing spheres.

At one time, the lively sparkle of her hazel eye, the rich crimson of her glowing cheek, the ruddy freshness of her lip, and the elasticity of her bounding step, would suggest the idea of

the "wild roe upon the mountains," or the "cup-bearer of Jupiter," or "the flowers of spring," or a thousand other threadbare similes; but, in the next moment, the beauty of Grace Macdonald would assume a higher cast. She no longer flashed upon the eye like the first rays of a warm sun—bright, but transient; her influence rather resembled the great luminary of day in his more uniform course of noiseless grandeur, travelling over the abyss of space, in the character of a beneficent being, whose smiles become a necessary part of our existence. The steady glance of her clear eye, the fine arch of her aquiline nose, the proud curve of her swan-like neck, and the measured firmness of her step, had anticipated the march of time, betokening to the reflecting eye a more decided character than her present versatile manners announced.

A rich scarf of tartan satin wreathed about her chest, contrasted well with a robe of snowy whiteness and airy texture; a low caul of black velvet was filleted by a variegated band, whose close pressure excluded every particle of her fine chestnut hair, except a few stray curls, ter-

minating the glossy braids which bordered her smooth and open brow, whilst the lofty plume of the eagle, the proud badge of her native clan, gave an increase of dignity to her majestic stature.

“*Regardez, regardez Monsieur Barebones!*” said the court jester, pointing to the silent couple at a distance; “those disciples of the renowned George Fox, of taciturn memory, are holding a silent meeting in yonder corner.”

“Hush!” replied the other: “hold thy peace, babbling fool!—jests, unlike lies, have long legs, and travel far. Go along, Georgy, thou art an ill-bred fool! Let me hear no more of such uncourtly jeers.”

“By Jove, but that’s an uncivil speech!” replied Buckingham—“Wert thou any other than what I take thee to be, may I keep Lent all the year round, and choose *thee* for my Father Confessor, if I would not arrest ye for a libel; only,” added he, contemptuously, “thy sorry carcass is already bespoke for the Newgate gibbet, unless thy fleshless ribs be wanted for a bundle of fagots at the next anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot.”

“ Hold—hold, sir !” said the king, in the commanding tone of majesty, “ thou art reviving a fashion of a somewhat ancient date. Scurrility may have as free currency, I grant, amongst courtiers, as in the polished circles who pull noses and break each other’s heads, at Bartholomew fair ; but there’s ‘ a time for every thing,’ thy text book says, and ladies’ withdrawing-rooms are not fit stages for dancing bears, or booths for clowns, who are quarrelsome in their cups.”

“ It is well, my liege,” returned Buckingham, with a stately bow, “ that your majesty should at all times, and upon all occasions, assert the royal prerogative, which allows to monarchs an unlimited command of lip-courtesy. I had forgotten, for a moment, the despotic charter, and, like an ignorant foreigner, was beginning to offer an exchange of goods, under the foolish presumption of a free trade. But I stand corrected. An ancient philosopher hath asserted that ‘ silence is not the gift of a fool ;’ and your majesty’s well-known aversion to loquacity gives double point to the aphorism.”

“ Thou hast no objection to make the most of

thy prerogative, at least," said the king, good-humouredly. "What other gentle animadversions hast thou in store for our royal ears, to supplant those which thou hast so delicately insinuated? Methinks the fabled illustrations of antiquity ought to be the model of so bright a genius; an oracle, like Buckingham, should have 'opened his dark sayings in parables!'"

"I am no dealer in fictions," returned the jester carelessly; "here comes a delicate 'pease blossom,' better formed by nature to act the crouching spaniel than your humble servant. Some fools, *unlike* lies, have cursed long shanks. Your majesty, whose magic touch hath power to charm away a proud dame's sulky humours, I fear, hath no cramp-bone on your royal person: 'tis hard for a dog to be a make-sport, and get kicked into the bargain."

"Prithee, fellow," replied the king, laughing, "don't let thy wit run so low; it's down to the very dregs—bitter—sour—and stale—faugh! I can't swallow a drop on't."

"Oh! there's no need to be fastidious; your highness has not had a taste of the grace-cup

to spoil your palate," said the baffled jester, humming, as he shook the musical bells of his cap, the following ballad to a popular air:—

Father Paul, a jolly soul,
Fairly drains the wassail bowl;
 Eating—quaffing,
 Talking—laughing,
How his twinkling eye-balls roll!

Now the grace-cup passes round,
Echoes from the roof resound,
 Eating—quaffing,
 Talking—laughing,
Whilst the biting gibe goes round!

See! the jolly monk would fain
To the dregs the vessel drain,
 Eating—quaffing,
 Talking—laughing,
Of his pious orgies vain.

Not so fast, cries one—good brother,
Fumes of wine thy reason smother.
 Pass the cup,
 Nor drink it up,
The grace-cup's pledg'd unto another.

“What’s that glib tongue of thine racing after?” said Philip, advancing with some curiosity, to know if the subject of this animated dialogue bore any reference to his fair mistress.

“O nothing particular,” replied the jester, in a caustic tone; “I was only lamenting that I must sell my honesty to buy, as Will Shakespeare has it, ‘golden opinions at court.’ Barebones was complaining of my dulness; and not without cause; for, in good sooth, my wit lost all its brilliancy at the very time it should have gained more.”

“When was that?” inquired Philip; “as I came up?”—“No,” returned the shrewd jester, “though I allow thee to be no bad whetstone for sharpening other people’s faculties. No—my wit stuck fast on the road when the *palmer* exchanged his grey habit and cockle hat for a suit of diamonds, and his pilgrim staff for the right hand of majesty.”

The king turned round with quickness at this random shot; and it was well for the archer that the object was beyond the reach of his flying arrows, or he might have paid dearly for his

rashness in attacking the royal preserves. The elegant Buckingham, infinitely more refined than his father, yet retained a slight tincture of hereditary coarseness, which made his allusions too personal, and his wit of too pungent a quality. It was observed, on the contrary, that his royal master, with all his thoughtless *gaieté du cœur*, was scrupulously attentive to all the delicacies of high breeding, and possessed, to an eminent degree, that nameless grace—that intuitive perception of *les agrémens de la société*, which, by its natural association with the beauties of sentiment and taste, diffuses an irresistible charm over the most trivial intercourse. It was this quick-sighted faculty which made him apprehensive lest the ears of the good old baron should have been wounded, in the course of the evening, by any indirect satire upon the members of his household. These were early days yet, with Charles, and the intoxicating cup of pleasure had not yet poisoned his heart's purest feelings, so as to make him disregarding of the faithful servants of his house.

The caution was, however, needless, for the

baron had long forsaken the busy scene, and was, in the usual phraseology, locked in the arms of Morpheus. Mistress Ruth was parading the long-room, looking as sombre and cumbrous as a suit of black velvet, stretched over a tolerable sized hoop, could make her; which, with a supplement of lawn sleeves, silver ornaments, and nodding plumes, gave her the appearance of a walking pall. Satisfied that her young charge would take care of herself, or too politic to hazard a doubt on so delicate a subject, she moved away to adjust the ceremonial of the supper table.

“By the court of Cupid!” exclaimed the loquacious jester, “’tis a fact. The spirit hath moved that knight of the dolorous garb, for he hath taken the fair hand of the still fairer Grace, and hath blessed her vision with a view of his captivating physiognomy. Ha, ha, ha! the stupid dolt! Could he not trust to the magic of his voice, without satiating the beholder with the display of his unveiled charms! O! how

vastly silly

To gild refined gold, or paint the lily!

Good *night* to ye, Sir Harry! your *day* ’s over!

The charm is broken—that dose of ipecacuanha is beginning to operate: the patient looks wan and faint.—Faith,” cried the speaker, as he paused at the door, “that fellow’s too handsome by half for Sir Harry.”

“Pooh! nonsense!” said the king, “I saw Nan myself in conversation with him just now, and the little rogue seemed quite fascinated. Codfish, though!” said he, after a scrutinising glance at the cavalier, “’tis none of Sir Harry, I could swear; but no—’tis impossible—and yet—that glimpse confounds me—look to your bride elect, Philip—treason lurks abroad.”

“O! I have no apprehensions on that score,” replied Philip, laughing.

“What! dost thou expect, most enviable gallant, to wound, Parthian-like, by flying, or to reach the winning-post, without the trouble of a race?”

“Faith, I never thought about it at all,” said the colonel, who, trusting to an *éclaircissement* at the supper table, quietly walked away, in the confident expectation that the strange mask and his fair companion would soon follow.

During all this tirade of lively nonsense, Grace Macdonald had recovered her usual self-command, and resumed her attempts at conversation by inquiring how long it was since the envoy had left Lisbon.

“Not many weeks. I had a quick voyage,” replied he, in a low, smothered tone, as if afraid to trust a voice, whose intonation appeared to produce an electric thrill in the bosom of the fair speaker, who, drawing her plaid closer, gave a slight involuntary shudder.

“How dreadfully cold it is to-night!” observed she, in a tremulous voice; “this weather must appear particularly severe to those who have lately sojourned beneath a more genial atmosphere.”

“O! as to that matter, all places are alike to a wanderer.” These words, spoken in a more natural tone, and accompanied by an audible sigh, brought a deep and sudden flush into the cold cheek of Grace Macdonald.

“I see,” continued the mask, in a feigned voice, “there are some fair dames exceptions to the general rules which apply to their sex. My

conductress was not of this incurious number, for she plainly demanded the success of my embassy at the court of Portugal."

"Doubtless she hath reasons for the inquiry which do not attach to me," replied Grace with calm dignity. "It is not the province of a country damsel to intermeddle with state affairs, and wherefore should I feign greater curiosity than the person most interested in the affair? since I much query," added she with archness, "if the royal suitor hath shown a lover-like impatience during the progress of your excellency's mission."

"I fancy your suspicions are wrong," returned the inquisitor; "the contract has not been a matter of indifference, though said to be one of policy rather than of personal liking, as I can easily believe. Donna Catherina is not a magnet of sufficient attraction to fix the wandering affections of a monarch, who was never subject to the laws of gravity."

"Your excellency is jocose, and rather severe," said Grace, laughing outright.

"How well a dimple becomes that beautiful face!" exclaimed the mask, with an impassioned

fervour, which quelled the rising mirth of his fair companion. "O, Grace," said he, seizing her passive hand with an eagerness which could no longer brook restraint, "my lovely kinswoman! my only destiny! it is for your dear sake alone that I have assumed this strange garb, and thrust myself, an unbidden guest, at your festive banquet. Had you, then, no curiosity to inquire the fate of *one* whose vigilant eye could have detected *you* under the most artful disguise?—but no! no! the name of Walter de la Fontayne never once escaped your lips, although I had hoped to provoke your interrogations by supplying the place of another. And my voice, too—O, Grace, was it possible that you could forget me so completely?"

The varying countenance of Grace Macdonald betrayed an internal struggle of conflicting emotions; at length, pride gained the mastery, as she coldly observed that "the contagion of foreign manners, and the example of a dissolute court had not travelled so far as the privacies of a country life; accordingly, the abode of truth and innocence was no fit haunt for knight-errants, or prying cavaliers."

Here I must observe, in justice to Dame Nature, who would never have cut out such a ready-made speech for so young and artless a nymph, that this ungracious welcome was delivered at broken intervals, and in a faltering voice, which seemed to imply a secret misgiving in the bosom of the speaker.

The cavalier it seems thought as much, for he very wisely left these feelings to take their own course, instead of impeding their favourable issue by extenuations, which would only have revived painful recollections, and driven them into an adverse direction.

“Walter,” said the young lady, after a pause, “I have wronged you, for I have forgotten our early ties, and treated you as an enemy; yet, it is not my nature to insult the fallen; and—you—are unfortunate—nay, worse—are dishonoured. Start not, I know it all. I have read every page in your sad history since last we parted. Alas! what availeth it to me, that Blanche da Guerilla is no more? Grace Macdonald never can be yours.”

“And wherefore *not, ma bien aimée?*” replied

Walter. "Are you not mistress of your own actions? Is there one who has the right to gainsay ye? Has not death severed the only tie which could separate us? Have I not paid dearly for past errors—errors into which desperation alone plunged me? Did you not forswear your early vows, Grace?" said he, reproachfully; "we who had played, laughed, talked, and grown up together, in the intimate communion of kindred spirits! What obstacle will you now urge to complete my misery?"

"None! none!" sighed Grace, "which is connected with any other person. It is my own free will and deed."

"O! do not say so," returned the cavalier, impatiently; "retract those cruel words! I do not recognise in these cold suspicions—these tame, guarded phrases, the frank, the warm-hearted, the generous Grace Macdonald."

"What can I say, Walter?" cried she, looking up at him: "your insinuations are as false as they are unkind; it is *yourself* who have forgotten our early vows. Nay, more; I was taught to believe," she continued, in a sorrowful accent,

“ that you were worse than lost to me ; that you had foresworn the land of your birth, your duty to your sovereign, your own noble lineage—in short, I was told that Walter de la Fontayne had defied his sovereign to his face—had violated the laws of hospitality, by seducing the daughter of a noble house ; that he was connected with a set of renegadoes abroad, who lived upon the spoils of treachery and the wages of iniquity ; and,” added she, in a hurried tone, “ that he was not only lost to himself, but dead to every honourable feeling.”

“ And you believed it all ?” exclaimed Walter, indignantly ; “ and this hellish fraud hath not only robbed me of fame, patrimony, and rank, but it hath estranged from me the native impulses of a kindred heart ! O Grace ! how I could wish to hate thee at this very moment, for lending thine ear to such foul calumnies ! Good Heavens ! was it not enough to become the sport of accident—the victim of misguided passions—the tool of a thankless, heartless prince, but the rude hand of the spoiler must tear away my hope’s last, long-hoarded treasure ?”

The dewy drops which had been slowly gathering in the beautiful eyes of Grace, dimmed her clear perception of surrounding objects, and prevented her from remarking that the company had gradually adjourned to the other rooms, during the present *éclaircissement*, and that she was now sitting *tête-à-tête* with the unmasked cavalier, whose full beaming eyes were intently fixed upon hers.

“ Speak to me but one word, *ma bella donna*,” said he, in a low whisper, gently encircling her waist—an action which instantly recalled her scattered senses, and roused her to a full view of her situation; yet her endeavours to extricate herself were only productive of still greater advantage to the daring cavalier, who thereby gained absolute possession of her delicate hands.

“ I retain these marplots state-prisoners,” said he, “ till their fair owner’s lips have sealed my destiny;” whilst at the same time, with the instinctive delicacy of true love, the cavalier withdrew his arm. “ Still no answer, Grace?”

“ Let me know your demands before we proceed farther, Walter,” said she, struggling to assume

composure ; “ you are the member of a very dangerous body,” glancing at his dress.

“ What if I put you to the question extraordinary ?” inquired he, hesitatingly.

“ Audacious inquisitor !” returned Grace, “ I have committed no offence which comes under the cognizance of your awful tribunal ; release me, therefore, from the rigours of *extreme* torture ;” and she essayed to rise, but Walter gently detained her.

“ Will you leave me, Grace,” said he, “ in this dreadful, cruel suspense, after all the risks I have run ? Don’t you see that this step may perhaps cost me my life ? Have I not hazarded my all upon a single venture ? And will you, for whom I would stake yet more, if possible—will *you* forsake me ?”

The faltering resolution of Grace Macdonald was unable to resist this pathetic appeal of her lover, and she still lingered near the enchanted spot.

“ Ah ! my beloved,” said Walter, in a softened tone, and melting tenderness of glance, “ have you forgotten those happy days we used to spend

together, when I helped you to make garlands for the village wenches on May-day, under the great oak in the park? Don't you remember poor Mattie went all over the bilberry wood in quest of us, and we were hid every bit of the time in Robin Hood's cave? How we used to frighten old Peter, by dressing ourselves up in sheets, and bolting out to him from behind the chapel door? Ah! we were sad mischief-loving elves, and well matched even then, Grace—"a proper pair," "a good-for-nothing couple of sea-gulls, always boding storm," as uncle Robert used to say, when we put him in a passion with burning his wig and hiding his tobacco-box. Dear old soul! my heart yearned towards him, when I met him strolling about in that old shipwreck jacket and broad-brimmed hat."

"O! he never uses those precious relics but on state occasions," said Grace, forgetting her maidenly reserve, and catching the infection of her lover's easy manners. "I remember all you have been speaking about; neither was I so blind or so deaf as you imagined on a *late* occasion."

“Ah! Grace,” said Walter, reproachfully, “have you, who have been reared in the shade, learned the stale trickeries of the city? It is not meet for the nightingale of the woods to borrow the artificial notes of the bull-finch!”

“The bull-finch you gave me,” said Grace, struggling to loosen her hand from his tenacious hold, “died yesterday, and I was—yes—I was so very foolish as to shed tears. You are very ungrateful, Walter, indeed you are,” continued she, in a voice choked with emotion, “and forget—”

“That moonlight walk by the side of the lake?” echoed the cavalier. “No, no! *ma bien aimée*, if I had not treasured in my heart’s inmost core the soft confessions of that silent hour, I had not been at your side this moment. Think you my proud spirit could have brooked the contempt of your averted eye, on my last visit to Fontainville, had I not preserved some memorial of the past to balance your neglect? Ah! Grace, what are the world’s disappointments cares, and privations, compared to the loss of one’s household gods? I have run the weary circuit of what is called a life of pleasure; I have

enjoyed the favour of royalty and the smiles of beauty. I might have done more; for honours courted my acceptance, and Fame has wooed me to her triumphs. All these have failed to engross the higher faculties of my soul; they have touched the surface of my thoughts, but had no power to penetrate the secret depths of my soul: it was your dear image alone which was the true object of my idolatry. Others, however valued, however worthy, were but usurpers of my devoted affections. Yet, mistake me not, Grace; I have no hope to win you by vulgar praise, or to surprise your better judgment by skilful flattery. I am no dissembler. Under the influence of impetuous passions and pernicious counsel, I had nearly made shipwreck of every good principle; but I have been steering homeward," said he, with a smile, which, like a sunbeam, stole athwart the deep shadows of serious thought, "and this shall be my guiding star!"—pressing the fair hand which he held to his lips.

Lulled in a fatal security, and overpowered by the eloquence of her lover, Grace lost sight of the immediate danger of their situation, in the hap-

piness of finding that she still retained undiminished power over his affections. The fire in the hearth emitted a less cheerful blaze, the lights grew more dim, and the boisterous sounds of revelry were gradually subsiding into broken strains of mirth; yet Walter and his beloved heeded not the lapse of time, nor once calculated upon the probability that their absence must soon become noticed. Wrapt up in each other, and mutually occupied by the task of allaying the suspicions which had weighed so heavily upon the minds of both, they sank into that ominous oblivion of passing circumstances, so natural to persons thus situated, and which is not unfrequently portentous of sudden approaching terrors.

CHAPTER VII.

Opportunity makes the thief.

OLD ENGLISH PROVERB.

Heye dyddelle ! dyddell !
 Ye katte and ye fythelle,
 Ye kowe thurpt ower ye mounce ;
 Ye lyttell dagge laught
 Toe se syche craftte,
 And ye dyshe runne abbate bbythe ye spoone.

ANCIENT NURSERY BALLAD.

“ SIR HARRY has fairly monopolised your absent mistress,” said the court jester, in the hearing of Philip.

“ I told you what would be the consequence, when you left the field of action open to the *enemy*,” added the king, laying an emphasis upon the word.

Philip, who had been actively engaged in the

laudable duties of a polite host, appeared struck by this latter observation. Drawing near the king, he whispered, in a hurried tone, "Has your majesty any particular reasons for rousing my curiosity, or is it a mere *jeu d'esprit*?"

"No!" replied the royal guest, "I am serious, 'pon honour, Phil; joking apart, I suspect foul play."

"How so?" returned the incredulous Philip, "it must be a frolic of Sir Harry's, to which your majesty has added a share."

"Understand me, then," replied the king, "in the way children do, when they call out, 'king's play.' This is a serious frolic, I tell ye, once for all; that fellow is none of Sir Harry:—Nan blushed through her paint when I taxed her with it—'tis Walter Fontayne. Codfish, man! don't you take me?" added he, peevishly.

A deep flush passed rapidly over the sunny countenance of Philip, whilst a fierce lightning gathered in his eye; yet he spoke not a word, but passing through the crowd, hastened to perform the rites of hospitality, with an assumed air of reckless indifference. The laugh, the song, and

the wine-cup went merrily round ; the gay host, himself, setting an example of unbounded conviviality, by pledging the company in rosy bumpers. The king alone, as he watched the disturbed countenance of Philip, saw aught forced or unnatural in his extravagant mirth, or any particular meaning in the warmth with which he broke out into that memorable chorus of Dryden :

Happy, happy, happy pair,
None but the brave, none but the brave deserve the fair !

“ Bravo ! bravo ! ” exclaimed the king, “ ’tis a stave worthy the foster-father of the godlike Alexander.”

Philip heard not the compliment. Taking advantage of the boisterous acclamations of the now riotous company, he had silently disappeared.

The merriment below stairs was yet more uproarious. The members of the rustic community having no character for fine breeding to support, and no habitual politeness to restrain their occasional excesses, gave way to an unrestrained indulgence of their appetites for food and satire. Their wit, if not so brilliant, was perhaps as pun-

gent as that of their betters, and unconsciously sported at their expense.

“ Oi say, Davie,” said the before-mentioned performer to the blind harmonist, “ thou wa’nt so much off o’ t mark, when ’t ’o talk’d o’ playin’ afore t’ king, for I heard that foine chap wi’ a fule’s cap cry out, ‘majesty,’ to one o’ O’d Noll’s sogers.”

“ By’r leddy !” cried a raw-boned youth, “ hed he a crown on ?”

“ Crown !” repeated David, contemptuously, “ they don’t wear their crowns i’ th’ house ; dost think, now, they go dizen’d out o’ that fashion ? they no but wear ’em when they go to Parli-ment, loike, or sit i’ their thrones on a set day, loike King Herod.”

“ By Guy ! if it should be the king, though !” said one. “ Oi niver thote o’ that, lad. If they ’d hed twenty crowns o’ their yeds, I shud no but ha’ thote it hed bin sham.”

“ Nor me, nother,” said another ; “ loike plow-bullocks or morris-dancers.”

“ You may be mistaken, either way,” said the dapper serving-man, before alluded to, looking mysteriously.

“Yo mane *right* one way, Mister Maurice; he mun be aither t’ on or t’ other.”

“If it wa’ the king,” cried one, “oi saw the queen.”

“There is never a queen,” answered one of the househould.

“Oi know better nor that,” replied the musician, sturdily; “th’ king ’s as mony woives as Solomon, or concuboines t’ on.”

“More fule he!” said old David, who was cursed with an uneasy rib; “one at a time ’s enough for ony body.”

“Oi know who wa’ t’ queen o’ em aw, though,” put in the youngster; “it wa’ our young missis. Moi eye! how grand it wa’!”

“Sich a power o’ foine folks,” echoed another, “an’ yet t’ wa’ but child’s play after a’.”

“Well, now,” exclaimed a young wiseacre, whom the wits of the village had christened Philosopher Sam, “I see note at a’ in it. To be sure there wa’ a soight o’ goodly company an’ rustlin’ o’ silks an’ satins. An’ some look’d merry, one can’t help sayin’; but then, agen, it wa’ all gone, loike the cracklin’ o’ thorns under a pot, as the wise man says. An’ there wa’ a

black-looking chap, stridin' up an' down th' room, jist for aw the world as if he'd come out on a charnel-house."

"Thou'rt quoite right, Sam," added another, "it's not hafe so much fun as dancin' round the May-pole, or Punch at a fair."

"Or a gam' at long-stick," said the youth.

"Does thou ring th' pancake-bell, next Shrove Tuesday?" inquired the last-mentioned speaker.

"No," answered he, "Dick Halliday's the biggest 'prentice."

"Ah? I thote thy time wa' out next month, an' Jack Gibbs, the blacksmith's lad, th' week after."

"Not a drop more, oi koindly thank you, sir," said Davie, as Maurice was politely going to replenish his cup.

"O! you must drink health and prosperity to the house of La Fontayne," returned the officiating president, with an air of consequence.

"To be sure, to be sure, with aw my heart," said a chorus of voices. Resistance was in vain, and poor David's prophecy, that "he should be quoite fuddled," was within an inch of comple-

tion, when noises of uncommon and alarming import arrested the attention of the company."

"By Guy, they 'r gotten to feeghting at last!" said one.

"It's no but fun," said another.

To explain this tumult, we must return to the banqueting-room, where we left the cavalier and his fair mistress deeply engaged in an interesting conversation.

"Walter," said Grace, all of a sudden relapsing into her former coldness of manner, "I do not half relish this clandestine proceeding of yours, and reproach myself for countenancing such a mad freak. Your dear uncle, and my kind guardian, is not of an inexorable temper; and I am sure," with a deep blush, "you are no bad pleader, and can make out a good cause."

"My path were straight enough," replied Walter, "were the baron alone in the way; but you know not, my dear Grace, the number or power of my enemies; nor would I shock your pure mind by unfolding the black arts which destroyed my peace, and wounded my early innocence.

"Nay, do not shrink from me, my best friend.

I am no longer the slave of sensuality ; the chain is broken which bound me to earth ; and whether you are mine or not, beauty and virtue are too strongly associated with the image of Grace Macdonald ever to allow their separation in future. No ! no !” cried he, with animation, “ her hallowed influence has so far spiritualised my affections, as to have left no relish for a less intellectual charm !”

Lives there the woman whose heart is so little susceptible of noble emotions, as not to sympathise in the thrilling enthusiasm which this confession kindled in the bosom of the beloved object to whom it was addressed ? or shall we scrutinise too closely the hidden springs which set our best feelings in motion ? Be it granted that his fair auditress felt a momentary elevation in the consciousness of becoming the arbitress of her lover’s destiny—shall we severely judge the latent vanity which unconsciously twined around her high-born thoughts ?

To feel herself the presiding deity in the heart of another ; to have regained her lost power ; to have retained her influence, even in spite of that

heart's rebel thoughts ; above all, to hold at her disposal the key of his fate, to lock or unlock at pleasure ; and, if we add to this dearest prerogative of woman, a virtuous determination to be the watchful friend, the guardian saint, the ministering angel—how shall we find words to describe the mingled emotions which swelled the bosom of Grace Macdonald, as, dropping her head insensibly upon the shoulder of her lover, she burst into a passionate flood of tears !

Walter trembled, lest a touch, a look, a breath should dissolve the enchantment of this delicious, confiding tenderness.

He felt the warm tears trickle upon his hand, and the soft pressure whose mute eloquence assured him of his secret empire over the heart of his beloved ; and Walter de la Fontayne realised in this precious moment the full power of a sentiment which the voluptuary knows only by name.

The long pent up feelings of Grace relieved themselves by deep-drawn tremulous sighs, as gently raising her head from its recumbent position, she murmured out, “ Walter, dearest Walter, I know not how it is that the deepest bliss of my

existence should oppress my heart with such a weight of sadness! yet I feel a strange presentiment of gathering ills."

At these words she threw a furtive glance round the deserted apartment, now wrapt in twilight gloom, and hiding her face in her lover's bosom, shrieked out, "It is there again, that dark rolling cloud, which never yet brought aught but woe to the house of La Fontayne!"

Walter turned round hastily, but no phantom met his eager gaze. The apparition was a living, tangible form, and the dark shadow, none other than Philip, the heir of Norman Abbey, and the affianced bridegroom of Grace Macdonald, whose fierce glance and supercilious sneer as he measured the offending culprits from head to foot, aroused them from their happy trance.

"It is well, Sir Knight," exclaimed the impetuous Philip, his voice trembling with passion, "that you have chosen the unsuspecting hour of openhearted conviviality for carrying on your base designs; but think not this venerable roof shall shelter ye from just resentment. Deemest thou," added he, sarcastically eyeing the cavalier,

“ that this lady is a meet companion for traitorous miscreants, or a fitting bride for a lawless adventurer ?”

The cheek of Walter grew blanched with rage, as he replied with bitterness, “ If I am an outlaw, Philip, the curse fall upon those who made me such ! but I defy your cowardly insinuations. I am unarmed and defenceless ; but were it otherwise, this would not be the first time I had taken the dimensions of thy valour, as thou well knowest.”

The warm blood rushed to the cheek and quivering lip of Philip at this cool taunt of his rival cousin. He drew from under his inner vest a short dagger which had been stuck in his girdle with a more innocent intention, and aiming it furiously at Walter, exclaimed, “ Defend yourself as you can, for, by the powers of hell, one of us shall fall !”

At these dreadful words of frenzied rage, Grace, who had been panic-struck at the commencement of the strife, now gathering strength from the exigency of the case, interfered with all her might, and endeavoured to force a passage through

the combatants ; but in vain did she exhort them, by all the ties of kindred, to desist from this unnatural warfare. Walter had already disarmed his kinsman, who, rushing eagerly forwards to recover his wrested weapon, made a false step upon the slippery ground, and received the sharp point of the obtruding weapon in his heart.

“ I am a dead man !” cried the reeling Philip, as the blood gushed from his wounded side : “ look to yourself, Walter, ’tis no time for idle ceremony.”

“ Fly !” cried Grace, in a commanding tone. “ Hide yourself in my cabinet, from thence you can escape by the turret stairs.”

Walter showed no inclination to profit by her suggestions. He stood in the attitude of calm despair, coolly watching her ineffectual efforts to stem the gushing tide of blood which crimsoned her snowy robe. Meantime, the alarmed guests had thronged to the bloody scene, and Grace, whose quick thoughts discerned all the dangers of Walter’s situation, disengaging herself from the drooping form of the dying man, forcibly drew him away.

“ Grace,” said he, in answer to her fervent importunities, “ I leave not this place alone; *you* have I sought and won at the peril of the sword, and for *you* I will live or die! If you have not courage to share my fate, I will proclaim myself a murderer, and deliver myself up into the hands of justice.”

“ O! cruel, ungenerous Walter!” cried Grace, wringing her hands in an agony of grief, “ what would you have me to do? Forsake my guardian in his sore affliction, and increase the sorrows of this bereaved family by my selfish unconcern? True, I know the blame rests on Philip; but, alas! you are at least the innocent cause of his death, and will it look seemly in me to countenance—”

“ A *murderer*, you would say; I see it all,” replied Walter, mournfully. “ Yes, dear Grace, you are right, and it is worse than *selfish*, it is *sacrilege* to involve you in the dreadful consequences of my involuntary crime. Yet, after such a blessed night as this, how drearily and lonely seems this sad reverse! Methinks to-morrow’s dawn, which rings poor Philip’s knell, will

toll the death warrant of my peace! Alas! alas! the blighted heart is only condemned to a more lingering death in the cold dungeon of its gnawing regrets!"

At these words a livid hue overspread his countenance, and cast a deathly gloom around his manly features; whilst Grace, whose head-gear had been torn away in the scuffle, now stood with pallid cheek and streaming locks, enduring all the torments of irresolution.

"Grace, Grace," said Walter, in a hollow sepulchral tone, "must I bid you an *eternal* farewell?" and he advanced with a firm step to take her hand, though cold dews stood upon his brow, and his dark eye had lost its accustomed fire.

With a desperate effort Grace evaded the action, and grasping his arm convulsively, said in a low smothered tone—

"I have nothing to lose. Misery awaits me on either side. I join my fate to yours: only be quick—time presses—they will be here in a moment—let us haste."

Her words roused the benumbed faculties of the spell-bound lover. Tearing away his cloak

from his own person, he threw it hastily over that of Grace ; while Jenny, who had been an unseen spectator of the whole affair, now pressed forwards to arrange her mistress's disordered dress, and fasten up her dishevelled tresses. "Take care of poor Mattie," whispered she.

"Mattie is not forgotten ; Ambrose has carried her a remembrance," replied Walter, as he led his fair charge down.

"Are you going to leave your poor servant ?" cried the disconsolate Jenny, as Grace pressed her hand in silence. Jenny spoke not, but her looks told plainer than words her resolution to share her young lady's perils.

"Meet us at the turn of the road in ten minutes or less," said Walter ; "your absence just now may excite further suspicion."

The lovers reached the hall, unobserved by any of the household, as they imagined, and crossing the front court, soon gained the borders of the lake, where a carriage stood waiting.

As Walter placed his trembling companion in the vehicle, the agitation of Grace prevented her from inquiring into the singularity of the circumstance ; but Walter was the first to explain the

matter, by observing that Ambrose had been commissioned to hire a carriage at the next town, as the steeds which had borne them on this perilous adventure were fairly worn out with fatigue.

The party proceeded with rapidity till they reached the turn of the road where Jenny was directed to join them. In a few minutes, which, to their excited feelings, seemed hours, the breathless abigail made her appearance, and the carriage, winged by love and fear, flew off, with the velocity of a comet, in the direction of Scotland, never stopping till the fugitives were beyond the reach of detection and pursuit, and indissolubly united in holy banns.

CHAPTER VIII.

My husband lives, that Tybalt would have slain,
And Tybalt 's dead, that would have slain my husband.
All this is comfort—wherefore weep I then ?

ROMEO AND JULIET.

And now your matrimonial Cupid,
Lash'd on by time, grows tired and stupid.

BYRON.

I REMEMBER reading an anecdote somewhere, not very long since, which interested me much.

A gentleman who was travelling through Switzerland stopped at a small auberge which lay on his route, for the purpose of refreshment, and as the evening drew on apace, he abandoned all thoughts of pursuing his journey till the morrow, and joined the motley tribe who were assembled in the common room. The auberge was situ-

ated in a beautiful fertile valley, commanding some of the bold attractive features of Alpine scenery; but the most interesting object about the place was a young and delicate-looking female, whose person and manners were strikingly superior to the rest of her companions. The calm serenity diffused over a countenance singularly handsome for the native of a district, where beauty is a rare quality, together with the religious habit which she wore, excited much curiosity in the bosom of the traveller.

“She is daughter to the innkeeper,” replied an itinerary merchant, “and is going to take the last vows of a very strict order in a few months.”

“Is there any particular reason for such a serious determination on the part of so young a female?” inquired the gentleman.

“None, that is generally known. She was always of a retiring pensive cast of character; never mingled in the sports of her age and station; always showed, even from her infancy, an aversion to the bustling occupations of her calling; and, in short, (but nobody knows the reason,) she never seemed to attach herself to this world; and

at length so far prevailed over her parents' wishes, as to have nearly passed her noviciate at the convent, which she will shortly enter for life." This anecdote interested our traveller much, and he retired to rest, ruminating upon the peculiar bias of mind which could induce a young girl in the prime of life, and bred in a sphere so uncongenial with high contemplations, to adopt such a decided plan of life. "Some affair of the heart is at the bottom of all this; some sudden impression, which has escaped the observation of the superficial eye. But, no!" the retailer of this simple anecdote could never learn that there was the "slightest ground for such a suspicion." What then could be the reason? The subject lay shrouded in mystery, and that species of sublimity which accompanies actions raised above the low conceptions of mortality!

When he returned to the room, in the morning, his informant took him aside—

"I was wrong in the account I gave you, Monsieur, yesterday. There *is*, I find, a reason why mademoiselle has taken a fancy to be a nun; it is this:—"

"Stay," replied the gentleman, interrupting

him, "I have no wish to hear.—My imagination has been drawn to the highest pitch. I had rather not let it down. I shall be told of some vulgar every-day incident; some mere matter-of-fact occurrence, which will put all my romance to flight: let me remain in blissful ignorance."

Something of this nature was the anecdote which occurs to me at this moment; it left one of those vagrant impressions which pop upon us when we are least aware of their existence, and I make use of it *sans cérémonie*, because it is so very *apropos* to my subject.

A highly popular writer, in allusion to the feelings which it portrays, has pathetically lamented, in the instance of a young and blooming pair, that "spring should ever yield to autumn; that young men and young women should ever grow old; or that brides should become wives!"

It is the influence of this fanciful sentiment, I rather apprehend, which leads most writers of fiction to bid their readers adieu at the foot of the hymeneal altar, leaving them on the tenter-hooks of anxiety respecting the progress of a felicity which they (poor unthinking mortals!) believe to have only just commenced.

The very heavy complaints of this nature so frequently urged in their disfavour, appears to me an increasing confirmation of their wisdom, as it proves the folly of attempting to satisfy the cravings of an excited imagination, out of the very scanty materials supplied by experience. These good people remind one of the boy in the fable; they would fain multiply their golden visions, and their rapacity becomes its own avenger.

I am not one of those sceptics who take it for granted that the raptures of the honey-moon must necessarily be succeeded by the chills of neglect or indifference. On the contrary, I think it very possible that the harassing inquietudes which so often cloud the anxious lover's horizon, should be replaced by a more uniformly tender sentiment; but, I *do* feel that pain treads fast upon the heel of pleasure; that a bright dawn is in too many instances overclouded; and that the bitter fruits of disappointment have sprung from the buds of early promise!

Grace Macdonald, whose nuptials had been solemnised under auspices which would have imparted a degree of superstitious terror to a mind less happily constituted, now yielded herself im-

plicity to the dominion of one absorbing thought. She felt that she had linked herself to stormy destinies ; but, like the dark genius of the storm, she could lift her majestic head above the warring elements in proud defiance. Gentle in her disposition, and perfectly feminine in her habits, she could not recall the past without a shuddering horror and sickening apprehension ; but she was assiduous to conceal these emotions from him who had been so long the victim of a cruel enmity—whose affection had first prompted the rash enterprise, and over whose devoted head was suspended the sword of offended justice. All other considerations vanished before the omnipotent influence of a new and powerful feeling. If the bloody corpse of the murdered Philip crossed her mind, the flitting image gave her, in its place, the unarmed and defenceless condition of her husband exposed to the fury of the midnight assassin ; or, if the anguish of the good baron at the loss of his first-born son, and the desertion of his cherished *protégé* shot a momentary pang through her bosom, she dashed away the remorseful tear as she gazed upon the mournful countenance of her beloved

husband. "My revered guardian," thought she, "has many comforts left, and amiable children to inherit the family honours. Philip will be no real loss when the first shock is over; but poor Walter! there would have been none to comfort him had I forsaken him in his last extremity;" and with this conviction, Grace satisfied every rising scruple upon the rash step she had taken.

Within a few weeks after their arrival in Scotland Grace came into possession of a fine unencumbered estate, three-fourths of which were immediately sold to liquidate the heavy fine imposed upon Walter for the murder of his cousin. He had been summoned before a jury of his peers to take his trial for the offence; but as the principal witness was prevented, by her near connexion, from appearing against him, and as there were none others found ready to swear malice prepense, the serious part of the charge was removed. Nevertheless, the circumstance, to many, appeared as a very dark transaction; and the abduction of Philip's betrothed naturally strengthened every vague suspicion. These rumours, as is generally the case, were a long time before they

reached the object of them ; and even when they did, the communication was only made through the agency of casual hints and inuendos, little understood by two persons solely engrossed by each other. Walter, who thought he could never sufficiently repay the generous devotedness of his wife, felt happy to be released from those social obligations which might withdraw him from her society, and the first year of their marriage passed in the purest enjoyment of reciprocal regard and domestic comfort. At the close of it Grace became a mother ; and another year stole on laden with a new source of pleasure. To Walter, such an event soon lost the charm of novelty ; but it was otherwise with the fond mother, the greater portion of whose hitherto concentrated affections were now directed towards her child. The incessant vigilance which she exercised upon this beloved object left her husband too much exposed to the brunt of those evils which he had never felt in her presence. When, in the mere absence of other pursuits, he sought abroad for recreation, he felt himself in the situation of a proscribed being shunned and neglected by all. The reception he

met with in society had a very irritating effect upon a mind long accustomed to the use of powerful stimulants, and naturally of a warm and social temperament.

It is true that Walter never, by a positively unkind word or look, allowed his wife to perceive the gradual decline of her influence; but wives, especially fond ones, are unhappily gifted with too much discernment in such cases, and it was not long ere Grace noticed a visible alteration in her husband's character.

Whether she failed in the proper use of opiates in this critical stage of the patient's disease, or whether her inordinate affection suggested the improper application of tonics, is uncertain; but one thing is of unquestionable truth—her remedies usually failed after the first trial or two. Still Grace persevered in her endeavours with a laudable constancy; she had entered on an arduous task, and she shrunk not from the test. Her maternal duties were suspended for the purpose of affording her more leisure for carrying on her conjugal designs; whilst her beauty, talents, and various accomplishments were put in requisition for

his amusement. Alas! for the perversity of human nature! Walter had seen his wife long enough not to know that she was handsome. He had grown too well accustomed to features, now settled down into the calm repose of matronly expression, and Grace had not the advantage of heightening her charms by a judicious contrast with the homely faces and figures of her Scotch neighbours. The *piquante* graces of her manners and conversation were rarely called into exercise by the collision of society; and she, who had been the chief ornament of a brilliant circle, was fast sinking down into the insipid character of a dull wife. Walter was not slow in observing this change; and the consciousness of being the original cause did not increase his self-complacency. He watched with a jealous eye the unremitting attentions of Grace, and reproached himself incessantly for giving her reason to suspect his growing weakness. There were times, even, in which he would discover symptoms of impatience at this surveillance, and when the gentle blandishments of Grace, or the innocent caresses of his infant son, became a wearisome tax upon his attention.

He would spend whole days abroad in the solitary exercise of the chase ; then return home, languid and spiritless, indisposed for conversation, and apparently the prey of secret, gnawing cares ! His wife was of a superior order of spirits ; her tastes and habits were refined, although her education had been confined to the popular accomplishments of the age. Without any other guide than the assistance of a remarkably strong understanding, her quick apprehension soon led her into the depths of her husband's character. She saw, too *early*, or rather too *late* for her repose, that the wandering, unsettled habits of her husband's early life had proved fatal to the cultivation of any steady principle of action ; that his virtues were such as required an extensive field of action and observation ; that he was the creature of impulse, and subject to alternations of passionate excitement and brooding melancholy.

Yet, this impression of his character, strange to say, increased his influence over the heart of Grace. It gave a tincture of sublimity to her relative connexion, and imparted an air of grandeur even to the common-place occurrences of domestic life. She

looked forward to the time, when the dark cloud, now hanging around her husband's path, would be gradually cleared; and her sanguine hopes foretold that the hour was not far distant, when Sir Walter de la Fontayne would proudly stand forth amongst his compeers in the field or in the senate, pre-eminent in talent, valour, and personal endowments. But these fond anticipations were never destined to be realised. Year after year wore away in anxious solicitude on one side, and listless despondency on the other; and the patience of Grace seemed inclined to take the same course, till an unforeseen circumstance arrested its progress.

CHAPTER IX.

Men are the sport of circumstances, when
The circumstances seem the sport of men.

BYRON.

Hope's precious pearl, in sorrow's cup,
Unmelted, at the bottom lay,
To shine again, when all drunk up,
The bitterness should pass away.

MOORE.

AFTER many days of brooding abstraction and querulous discontent, Walter suddenly announced his intention of visiting Lisbon, in order to settle some affairs which required immediate attention. What these affairs were, remained a secret, although Grace strongly suspected that they related to pecuniary embarrassments; and, with the generous zeal of love, she secretly executed a deed which transferred to her husband the whole or

the property which had been appropriated to her own personal wants, reserving only a very scanty portion out of her once flourishing estates for necessary expenditure.

The prosecution of this plan, together with the needful preparations for the voyage, supported her drooping spirits under the trial of this unwelcome separation; but as the time of Sir Walter's departure drew near, her thoughts involuntarily reverted to the course of events which had preceded their marriage. On the subject of his first connexion her husband had always maintained an uniform reserve, and a strong dislike to interrogations concerning his early history. *Once*, and but *once*, had Grace ventured to lead the conversation that way; and the decided answer she received, though couched in the tenderest terms, contained a sufficient prohibition to a delicate mind.

“Ask me not of the past,” replied he, with an impressive accent; “there are passages in my stormy life which I would sooner disclose to my *worst enemy* than to my *best friend*. Be satisfied that I am *yours*, and yours alone; nor envy

Blanche da Guerilla the tear which I shed to her memory. Alas ! it is all which the malice of her enemies has left her."

Grace had been a wife nine long years, without a single wish to leave her husband's side ; and yet he, for whom she had sacrificed friends, family, and fortune, now volunteered a separation for an indefinite period. The thought was painful, even to a mind not over sensitive, and she shed some bitter tears in secret. Without being able to account for her sensations, she felt an instinctive dread of this undertaking ; and, although blessed with a larger share of heroism than is usually attributed to her sex, she could not disguise her fears from the keen glance of her husband, who rallied her on the subject.

" My dear Grace," said he, " we have both lived so much for each other, that we, perhaps, have forgotten all other claims but those which belong immediately to ourselves. I have business abroad, which imperiously demands my presence ; it has been too much neglected already. Now, confess truly—are you not tired of seeing my woe-begone visage ? A short absence will advan-

tage us both : you will lose the cursed plague of an idle man off your hands ; whilst I—O ! do not fear but I shall return a willing captive to your arms, and ready to hug the chains which my capricious folly had nearly rendered burdensome !”

Grace tried to smile through her tears, but it would not do ; her laugh became hysterical. She pressed the glowing cheek of her young son, and almost smothered him with her burning kisses. Evelyn complained that the tears of his lady mother burnt his cheek, and hastily withdrew his face.

“ Will you, too, leave me, my child ?” said she, reproachfully. “ Why don’t you go, then ?” continued she, as Evelyn, touched with compunction, lingered near her seat.

“ Mother,” said the boy, “ I will not leave you. I should like to see strange countries, and the wide ocean, and all the fine sights people tell of in travel-books ; and when I came back, how grand it would be to talk of what I had seen ! How it would make the Dominie stare—and Donald too—he never saw a bigger mountain than

Ben Lomond. And yet," said the boy, turning grave and thoughtful, "I will not go for all that. Jenny says—but I must not tell what she said in my hearing; but Jenny did not tell me *not* to tell," added he, hesitating.

"Well, what did she say?" inquired his mother.

"Why, Jenny thinks no good will come of this journey, for she saw a bogle yestreen at Braemar Castle."

"Ah! my bonnie ghost-seer," cried his father, taking him between his knees, "and what was it like? Duncan, the herdsman, at the top of Ben More? or his kittle dun cow, putting her horns through the old grated window?—or Ralph, the blind jackdaw, fluttering about the loose ivy?—or perhaps my sedate son and heir himself, dressed up in Luckie Buchan's old jacket?—or—"

"Jenny kent weel enough it wasna them," said the little fellow, proudly. "Duncan lights his pipe every night at the kitchen hearth, and Mag comes bleating at his heels. It was no jackdaw either, but a true bogle, like a giant in a black cloak; and Jenny said it

threw it off, and there was a deep gash in its side."

His mother started. "Do not go, dear Walter," said she, turning pale, and laying her hand on his arm, persuasively.

"I am not gifted with second sight, my dear Grace," replied Sir Walter, with collected firmness, "or I would this instant go to Fontainville, and hold a colloquy with Philip's ghost."

Grace shuddered at these words, and the severe tone in which they were delivered.

"My dear husband," said she, after a pause, "why suffer your mind to dwell upon past wrongs or past errors? let us forget the one, and endeavour to amend the other."

"I wish I could see a bogle," cried Evelyn, absorbed in the contemplation of Jenny's envied faculty. "I was born on auld Hallowe'en, and Donald says a' the Macdonalds have the second sight."

"Nonsense!" cried Sir Walter, willing to avert the unpleasant subject, "we have had enough of bogles and kelpies and worricows;" yet he sank into a fit of musing, longer and sadder than usual.

The parting of Grace with her moody husband was inexpressibly tender. Never had he appeared so fond, so considerate, so much like his former self. He thanked her a thousand times over for the numberless sacrifices she had made on his account, and deplored the constitutional perversity which had prevented him from making a suitable return. "Heaven will reward you, my beloved," said he, "and I trust, one day, restore you to that rank in society which you are so well qualified to adorn, and which you have forfeited by your imprudent generosity!" Walter seemed inclined to say more, but the pallid cheek and tearful eye of Grace damped his courage. With the instinctive perception of woman, she perceived his hesitation in a glance, and was the first to question him respecting his mental reservations.

"If there be any thing, dearest Walter," said she, "which my sympathy could remove, do not fear to trust me. I can bear any thing sooner than your jealous—should I not rather say, *unkind* reserve, upon some points?"

"My dear Grace," replied he, "I had hoped you would cease to interrogate me on this tor-

menting subject. You know that, in spite of my wayward humours, my affection is undiminished, and that my esteem—nay, reverence—for your exalted virtues, has increased the value of the sacrifice you have made for my sake. Distress me not, I beseech you, by a recurrence to this painful theme.”

“Are you not unjust?” replied Grace, not a little hurt at this unexpected repulse. “There are few wives, I will venture to say, situated as I am, who would have shown so little prying curiosity.”

“I know it—I feel it,” said her husband, kissing off the falling tear. “You are above the weaknesses of your sex, and I was unjust and petulant: forgive me this once. If I return to you in safety, I trust it will be under brighter auspices. My heart will be lighter in the course of a few months: every hour’s absence will unite us closer to each other; and when all impediments to free communication are removed, you shall have my history at full length. It is but just, dear Grace, that you who have fallen into the snare of my exculpatory pleadings, should have

the satisfaction of pronouncing my honourable acquittal upon the testimony of credible and substantial facts."

This direct allusion to the past—this open and candid confession, dispersed the gathering gloom upon the brow of Grace ; and she cast a look of proud triumph upon the handsome features of her husband, now illuminated by the kindling glow of hope and sensibility.

" He is *mine*, and mine alone," thought she, as she pressed his hand to her heart ; " and he is dearer to me for having some leaven of human infirmity about him."

She forgot the approaching farewell, and all its pangs, in the luxury of having her doubts dispelled, and her fondest wishes realised. The solemn tones of her husband's voice broke painfully upon her ear, and startled her with new apprehensions.

" There is one thing I would say, my dear Grace ; all things are uncertain in this changing world. I may be with you in a few short months, or I may *not*—God only knows ; but should any calamity befall me, promise me, that you will not

sue for protection at the hands of your unfeeling relatives. I know you would never do so, for your own sake ; but you have a truly noble and generous heart, which would lead you to give up even your independence for the sake of your child. Would that you could return with comfort to Norman Abbey ! but I ask you not to solicit such a thing ; it would be a degradation to which your proud soul could never stoop. Rather remain in obscurity ; you have feelings that will dignify any station, and a mind which can support itself. You will stand alone, my dear Grace, but you will be released from that miserable servitude which attends a humiliating concession to the prejudices, opinions, and caprices of others. Be the guardian, counsellor, and friend of your child ; I leave him entirely to your disposal. Take warning by me, dear Grace, and guard him from the contagion of bad example. Exert all the energies of your powerful mind, and bring them to bear on this grand point. His passions are naturally violent ; add not fuel to the flame, by yielding to their importunities. I am earnest, my love, because I am well taught in the school of expe-

rience, and authorised to dictate where others might be silent : but remember," said Sir Walter, smiling, " there is a very probable chance that I may live to alter my will, and that *this* may not be my last act and deed;" embracing his wife tenderly, and imprinting a long farewell upon her trembling lips.

For several days the Lady Grace thought it impossible she could ever sustain the weight of sorrow which oppressed her bosom, and paralysed every action ; but time gradually smoothed away the poignancy of her regrets. Her enterprising mind found constant employment in scenes and pursuits apparently destitute of interest. She took an active part in the management of her estate, became her own steward, and meditated an agreeable surprise for her husband on his return, by certain improvements which she had planned. Often did she and her young son ascend the steepest mountains, wrapped in their plaids, fearlessly encountering the piercing keenness of a Scotch blast upon wild trackless wastes, covered with a perpetual snow. These hardy exercises strengthened their frames, and gave

elasticity to their spirits, whilst Evelyn learnt to associate his mother with the exhilarating impressions they conveyed, and neither asked nor cared for a more juvenile companion. She, on her part, beheld with maternal pride, the dawning beauty and intelligence of her only child ; and, in truth, it was such as might justify the admiration of a less partial parent, although of that peculiar description which wins upon acquaintance, rather than attaches at first sight. To ordinary observers he was but an ordinary child, whilst to less indulgent persons he appeared shy, petulant, and overbearing. But to the eye of the sanguine mother, the shyness arose from an intuitive delicacy, which shunned the prying eye of vulgar curiosity ; the petulancy, from acute sensibilities ; and the imperative qualities, from a species of aristocratic pride, which gave her no inward displeasure. She saw, or fancied she saw, in him the ardent qualities of his father, blended with her own buoyant spirits and deep-rooted affections. His overpowering vivacity could at any time be checked by a tale of distress ; her tears would arrest his fiercest resentment ; whilst a tale of fraud, cruelty,

or injustice, would immediately enlist his feelings on the side of the oppressed.

Abstracted from all society, and maintaining a scrupulous reserve towards her neighbours, the Lady Grace whiled away the dreary hours of her husband's absence. She had received numerous letters from him, with assurances of his health and continued welfare. The tenderest expressions of anxiety respecting herself accompanied this intelligence; and a small postscript in his last letter added, that "she must not be surprised if he brought a stranger to Castle Invercald."

Grace was puzzled and rather annoyed by this mysterious postscript. "Who could this stranger be?"

A crowd of disagreeable feelings rushed to her mind, and she hastened to deposit the letter in an old-fashioned bureau, which was the usual receptacle for such like documents. Opening a private drawer, which seemed a proper sanctuary for so valuable a treasure, her eye glanced upon a fragment of crumpled paper, which evidently appeared to have been condemned to the flames; but was,

from some casualty, thrust thither for temporary concealment. It was partly torn up; but the superscription bore a foreign stamp; and Grace now recollected that, previously to her husband's voyage, he had received a packet from the next seaport town. She had always been accustomed to consider these communications as the natural result of his foreign connexions; and trusting to her husband's assertions, that the correspondence related to pecuniary transactions, carried on through the agency of a long-trying friend, resident abroad, she had given herself no concern about the matter. Now, these assurances, satisfactory as they had proved on a former occasion, did not flash the same conviction to the absent wife, as when her husband was at hand, to dispel her rising suspicions by his open confidential remarks. "Was it to this friend Walter alluded in his last letter?" She stood pondering over the manuscript, with a disturbed look, as if the demon of woman's peace had suddenly possessed her with a violent inclination to make herself mistress of its contents. It is a very common, and a very just observation, that nothing surprises one upon re-

flection so much as the extraordinary volition of thought.

In less time than half a minute the Lady Grace had retraced almost every step of her life ; at least that considerable portion of it which embraced her connexion with the sister country. She recalled the buoyancy and elasticity of spirit, the noble frankness, the careless generosity, the utter freedom from selfishness, which had distinguished the character of Walter de la Fontayne in their early days. Then came the vague rumours which had reached her ears at different times during his absence ;—his romantic excursion with the young English monarch ; his residence in foreign countries ; the enterprising nature of his negotiations on behalf of his sovereign with the generous Don Lewis Haro, at the foot of the Pyrenees. Then rushed upon her mind more painfully his mysterious connexion with the house of Braganza, with his alleged revolt of honour and integrity in support of his own ambitious projects, which was urged as a sufficient ground for his subsequent neglect at the English court !

But her heart thrilled with counteracting tender-

ness of emotion, as she recalled the vision of her departed husband, such as he appeared to her fond eyes on the eve of her departure from his uncle's house—the sport of malice, the victim of treachery, and the adventurous suitor who had wooed and won her, in despite of scorn, insult, and defiance!

Yet, scarcely had these softer impressions taken possession of her thoughts than they were obliterated by returning suspicions. Walter—the gay, the generous, the disinterested lover—was metamorphosed into the cold, gloomy, and discontented husband, except at rare intervals when glimmerings of his former self stole, “like angel visits, few and far between.” Could Time, that universal destroyer, have effected this mighty change, or could the influence of mere frivolity and pleasure operate so fatally on his disposition?

“No, surely, it cannot be,” thought the Lady Grace, whose inexperience rendered her insensible to the indurating process carried on in a heart enslaved by the world's deceitful allurements. She was willing to allow its partial influence in

producing negligent habits, and unsettled resolutions ; but she could never account for that total overthrow of his noble mind, which had been so visible in his wayward acts and petulant manners. “ I have now the key which will unlock this mystery,” mused she, as dropping into a seat, she held the tempting morsel between her finger and thumb in a deliberating attitude. “ This little bit of waste paper has done all the mischief, and sent poor Walter roving across the seas. I guessed as much before, but I could never persuade him to confess what lay so heavy upon his breast. Poor fellow ! his nature was kind, and he feared to give me pain ! Ah ! cruel Walter ! thou didst make me suffer more by that froward conduct of thine, than if I had been privy to all thy misdeeds !—But stay, I am on forbidden ground. What hath bewitched me to know that which can do me no *good*, and *may* do me a great deal of harm ? I shall hear good news in time, for Walter promised as much when he left ; and bad news travels fast enough.”

Of such a nature were the cogitations of the simple-minded Lady Grace. Scrupulously upright

in her conduct, and maintaining a jealous mistrust of her motives, she began to reproach herself severely for allowing her imagination so far to control her actions, as to suspend the sentence of execution, which her better judgment pronounced against the unconscious criminal she held in her hand, and whose passive silence only waited the inspiration of her averted eye, to become mutely eloquent.

Poor lady! it was a sore trial between the flesh and the spirit; and the strife became doubly oppressive, from her grievous sense of her own delinquency.

It is plain she did not comprehend the fugitive qualities of that subtle essence whose fixed residence, like that of the Deity, is a mere figure of speech, and not intended to convey an idea that heaven or the sensorium is the permanent abode of the Supreme Intelligence and his multiplied incarnations!

Dear self-tormenting creature! did she not know that our involuntary thoughts are often wilful intruders, whom no act or will of our own forces into our presence—like forward and unwelcome

visitants, settling themselves down very snugly as invited guests ?

If she had never found this out, in the framing of her well-digested code of wisdom, she had studied the works of King Solomon, as well as the volume of Human Nature, to little purpose. No ! she kept pondering over and over again the sad crime of indulging an idle and criminal anxiety, till she had worked herself up into a desperate resolution of inflicting summary vengeance upon her truant inclinations by desperately throwing the important document into the fire.

When the deed was done, and the ashes of the consumed paper floating in the grate, gave a tantalising view of its illegible characters, the Lady Grace half repented her heroic purpose, and she could not restrain some “natural tears ;” but, as I observed, she had a strong mind, and “wiped them soon.”

She fancied that she had performed an imperative duty ; and I feel certain she was right, although on this question the fair advocates of expediency would suggest that she might have “peeped at the first line or so,” to ascertain its

general sense, or if it were written in a male or female hand inside. Some would raise an outcry against the folly of making a bonfire of it, because what harm could a morsel of paper do, kept under lock and key, ready for consultation at a particular crisis, when it might prove an invaluable treasure? Besides, some pious gentlewoman, habituated to the perversion of Scriptural maxims, together with the unlearned researches of domestic life, might add, "Who knows but it was placed by Providence as a guiding post in her way to direct her future plans?"

The vigorous mind of Lady Grace would have rejected all these pitiful subterfuges had she been unfortunately exposed to their influence. As it was, her mind was solely exercised by the unnatural warfare she was exercising against her stray volitions. I blame her for nothing but making the sacrifice a rigid *auto da fe*, instead of a voluntary offering at the shrine of duty and conjugal affection.

The letter, thus destroyed, seems to curtail my narrative in a very provoking manner; but I can assure the reader, from the evidence of a descend-

ant, who has preserved a rough copy of the original, that the following transcript is nearly a fac-simile, and that the contents are given to him in a less mutilated condition than they appeared in the hands of the Lady Grace.

The existence of such a manuscript is not singular, as the importance of the communication would naturally induce the writer to preserve a duplicate, either for his own satisfaction, or to be transmitted at some future period ; a custom not unfrequent to those who are obliged to correspond through the medium of an uncertain element.

CHAPTER X.

————— Call me a fool ;
Trust not my reading, nor my observation,
That, with experimental zeal doth warrant
The tenour of my book ; trust not my age,
My reverence, calling, and divinity,
If this fair lady lie not guiltless here,
Under some biting error.—————

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

TO SIR WALTER DE LA FONTAYNE, KNIGHT,
THESE PRESENTS GREETING.

Alandra, Province of Estremadura, March, 1672.

WHAT, in the name of St. Ignatius, could have offended your Turbulency in my last ? Vegetating, as you seem to do on those barren mountains, could I do less than fancy you one of the lichen tribe sticking to the grey walls of the old family mansion ? From the date of this, thou mayst rea-

sonably conclude that I have bid adieu to the bustling world, and am sublimising in the clouds like thyself. So far, so right ; though but moderately skilled in the belles lettres, I have the character of a *savant* to sustain, as well as that of a courtier, neither of which posts are sinecures, as you may easily conceive.

Here am I, surrounded by a whole legion of fanciful genii as wild and intractable as the goats now browsing opposite my window, perched upon the top of a cliff, whose dizzy height makes me tremble, lest a single false step should precipitate them into the abyss of waters beneath. I was allured hither, partly by the enthusiastic admiration of the elegant author of the *Lusiad*, and a desire to perfect myself in the native language of Lope da Vega, and Calderonia, and partly from a yearning to escape the tumults of a court life. My pilgrimage is now ended ; and unless the Fates, those capricious rulers over the fortunes of men, order it otherwise, this will be the last letter thou wilt receive from me out of Portugal. After this short sketch of my own affairs, let me proceed to those in which you are deeply involved.

Since the prosperous issue of an enterprise, which has at length restored the ancient independence of Portugal, and promoted John Duke of Braganza to the imperial purple, there have been no bounds to the arrogant pride, and soaring ambition of the Guerilla family. Elevated to the highest offices of the state, they now affect airs of tenfold dignity, and swell with the conscious importance of a near alliance to royalty. Yet the triumph of their exaltation is somewhat checked by the mortifying reflection, that, but for the intrigues of an impertinent English knight, the beautiful Blanche might have shared the brilliant fortunes of an English monarch. These cunning Portuguese are deep speculators, and, even in the hour of his adversity, an exiled prince was infinitely preferable to a needy commoner.

Alas! my dear Walter, the boasted liberty of this degraded country is a paltry assumption to which they can lay no just claim, so long as their internal economy bears the stamp of conventional despotism. These ancient fidalgos lord it over their fellow-citizens of a lower degree to an extent which would surprise our English gentry,

and make our peasantry gratefully alive to the privileges of an administration which allows them to "sit under their own vine and fig-tree, none making them afraid." But I am speaking of a subject familiarised to your mind by a residence in this realm of feudal tyranny.—To return to my subject. The implacable vengeance of Alonzo da Guerilla and his *amiable* brothers against their lovely, unfortunate kinswoman, has risen to the highest pitch, as I certified to thee in my former epistle, since thy last marriage. And, now we are on this subject, I must tell thee what I understand that old whimsical courtier, my Lord Digby, said of thee the other day at the English court. Quoting the book of Proverbs, he observed, that if "the light of the king's countenance were life," thou oughtest to have had one foot in the grave by this time. Truly, his most gracious majesty was not likely to receive into his favour the audacious subject who had twice crossed him in his amours: for I can tell thee, upon good authority, that he had cast an evil eye upon thy present loving spouse.—But, as I was saying about the unfortunate Blanche—not content with for-

bidding masses to be sung at all the churches for the repose of her soul, and refusing a shelter to her ashes in their ancient family cemetery, her unfeeling relatives have even pronounced a sentence of excommunication against the religious house which afforded her an asylum from their unnatural persecutions.

My rank and fortune entitles me to some consideration in a court so nearly connected with our own. Consequently, I have free access to the palaces of these jealous nobles at all times and seasons, without being fettered by the tedious forms of etiquette. The haughty Don Alonzo, who is now promoted to the rank of marquese, has condescended to bestow upon me several flattering marks of distinction, enrolling me in the list of eminent literati who frequent his select *conversazioni*. These meetings occasion no inconsiderable alarm to the pompous Padra Urban de Costello, whose suspicious glances towards our circle lead us to apprehend that he means to denounce us at the next approaching festival of the Holy Inquisition, as secret members of the proscribed illuminati.

The good father extends a greater portion of benevolence to myself, the harmless pupil of nature, and we enjoy much of each other's society. He is a man of a very cultivated mind, and naturally liberal feelings. His stoical philosophy, I have discovered, on more than one occasion, to be assumed, in order to satisfy the imperative demands of his bigotted creed.

A few weeks ago, the conversation accidentally turned upon the unhappy Lady Blanche. It was a delicate subject, and I approached it with timidity. The padre was perceptibly agitated at the sound of her name; for she had been a "favourite pupil," he said, "and a pet lamb in his fold." A convulsive tremor passed over his features as he exclaimed in a low tone, crossing himself, "Heaven have mercy upon her soul! she is gone to her long home. Must the vengeance of man pursue her thitherward?"

I took courage, from his avowed sympathy, to ask him a few particulars respecting her death.

"It was always reported," said he, "that the Lady Blanche had absconded with an English nobleman, during her husband's absence in Italy.

Struck with remorse, she is said to have retired to the convent of Santa Maria at Villanora, the abbess of which is a near relative, and much attached to the Lady Blanche from infancy. How far this may be correct, God only knows; or wherefore the Lady Blanche should wish to bury her shame amongst her own kindred. It is a mysterious piece of business. But what astonishes all the world is, the offence given by the convent of Santa Maria, the superior of which is sister to Don Henriquez da Guerilla."

This conversation sank deep into my mind. I retain somewhat of my early fondness for adventure, and, for your sake, my dear friend, I could not restrain my impatience to fathom the affair.

After a tedious journey of several days, (you know all the miseries of travelling in this country,) I reached the frontiers of Entre Minho Douro, and, habited as a pilgrim, found no difficulty in gaining admission into the convent of Santa Maria, on the plea of necessary refreshment. I was treated with the utmost kindness and liberality by these generous recluses, who devote more time and labour towards the active duties of

religion than the generality of such dronish communities. I offered to reward them with gold ; but they rejected the idea of pecuniary compensation, as an attempt to rob them of their purest enjoyments in the practice of disinterested benevolence ; and I could only induce them to accept the contents of my purse, by assuring them that my fortune was ample, and that I was only discharging the duty of a good steward, by applying the bounty of Heaven to the relief of those of their destitute brethren who might hereafter claim the benefit of their pious offices. These judicious hints satisfied all their scruples, and gained me access to the abbess, to whom I expressed a desire of proffering my thanks for the hospitality I had received under their holy roof.

I almost repented my resolution, when, upon the return of the messenger, I was ushered into the presence of a stately personage, who greeted me with a few words of cold acknowledgment for the honour I had conferred upon their establishment. I answered that the obligation was all on my side ; that I was an Englishman travelling

for amusement, and of course indebted to the civilities of strangers for my accommodation.

As I spoke, the abbess had laid aside the thick covering which concealed features replete with dignity and matronly grace—a circumstance which strengthened the favourable impression I had received at the first tone of her soft and liquid voice.

“Senhor,” said she, in tolerable English, “I know not the rank of the person I am addressing; but you will pardon the liberty I take, in asking if you know any thing of an English family bearing the name of La Fontayne? I have particular reasons for the inquiry; although,” added she, with a winning smile, “neither our secluded station, nor sacred duties, at all times, acquit us of the heinous charge of inquisitiveness.”

This was just what I wanted; therefore you may be sure I gave the good lady a full account of your family, together with our early and intimate connexion. Amongst the rest, I failed not to deplore your rash alliance abroad. The cheek of the abbess grew flushed at my allusion. “All rash connexions,” replied she, with dignity, “in-

evitably bring misery in their train ; but the blind partiality of Blanche da Guerilla to your friend is the only crime of which she can justly be accused."

My countenance, I believe, expressed the joy I felt at this remark ; and Donna Celestina grew still more warm in the vindication of her niece, till I drew from her, insensibly, all that related to her mysterious disappearance.

The substance of it ran thus :—During your absence from Spain an express arrived from Lisbon, bearing letters to the Lady Blanche from several of her kinsmen. These epistles breathed the most conciliatory spirit, and urged her to accompany the messenger without delay, for the purpose of receiving the forgiveness and blessing of her dying father. Transported out of all measure at these unexpected overtures of reconciliation, and trembling with anxiety, lest she should not reach Lisbon in time to embrace her dying parent, the poor lady forgot her unfitness for the journey, and hurried onwards with the utmost rapidity. Her companion never left her till they reached Villanora, where Blanche, to

her infinite surprise, found herself left alone within the precincts of the convent, where she had been partially educated. It was many days before she could get a sight of her relative, the Lady Abbess of Santa Maria ; and when she did at length condescend to visit her, Blanche was chilled and awe-struck by her frigid tone and saddened aspect. Throwing herself at her feet, she besought her to explain the strange contradictions which had beset her ever since her fatal departure from Spain.

The surprise which this question produced brought on another ; and it proved, upon close investigation, that the family of Blanche had made use of a pious fraud, in order to decoy her into a situation, where the absence of her husband and the influence of Donna Celestina might operate so powerfully upon her sensitive mind as to induce her to take the monastic vow. For the furtherance of this project, the ecclesiastical rulers were easily prevailed upon to pronounce the marriage of Blanche with a heretic null and void ; whilst a life of voluntary humiliation was represented as the only means by which she could wipe away the foul blot which clung to the honourable house of Da Guerilla. Deceived also by

false statements, relative to the conduct of her young kinswoman, it is not strange that the Lady Celestina should look upon her with an eye of jealous reserve ; but the artless, unstudied narrative of Blanche went to the heart of the kind abbess, and made them better friends than ever. She lavished upon her niece a mother's proudest, kindest attentions ; and, turning a deaf ear to the importunities of her ambitious family, endeavoured to screen her from the bitterness of their resentment at what they termed her heretical obstinacy, in refusing the consolations of the Holy Church.

Numerous methods were devised by the Lady Blanche, in order to apprise her husband of her situation ; but in vain : she was surrounded by spies, who watched her movements and counteracted all her efforts to release herself from their controul. With maternal tenderness, and genuine piety, did the abbess beseech her to be comforted, assuring her of her continued protection, and gently reminding her that the mercy of Heaven had, as it were, miraculously guided the steps of her adversaries in choosing for her such a friendly asylum.

Like the delicate flower which bends to the

passing storm, the Lady Blanche bowed to the dispensation of Heaven, and the abbess called her passive despair the holy calm of resignation ; but the rough blast had snapt the stem, and its vital powers were fled !

Her kind relative wept over her fading charms, as, day by day, life seemed a burden too great for endurance ; and she rejoiced when one day a letter arrived, directed in a strange hand, to the Lady de la Fontayne. The poor anxious sufferer eagerly seized it, gave a feeble expression of disappointment, glanced her eye hastily over the contents, and fell into strong convulsions. To these succeeded the pangs of labour ; and the wretched Blanche expired in giving birth to her first-born.

The letter which caused this dreadful catastrophe was from an old acquaintance, to whom she had confidentially made known her case ; and who, after gravely detailing the solemn charges laid against her, proceeded to inform her, that in consequence of her supposed infidelity, her husband had left the country, and had never been heard of since.

Such, my dear Walter, was the substance of the Lady Celestina's communication. Had not duty required an immediate disclosure, you should still have remained in ignorance. Yet, I cannot help thinking it better upon the whole, that you should be made acquainted with these facts, as they remove a load of infamy from the memory of the unfortunate Blanche, and clear her husband from the reflected dishonour of her imputed guilt. Come, then, my dear Walter, and embrace your child, the very image of your lost wife. The Lady Celestina longs to see you, and to mingle her tears with yours over the grave of her hapless niece. I saw it yesterday, and have scratched a few lines on the simple urn which marks her last abode. It lies sheltered in the prettiest thicket of laurels and almond-trees you ever saw. The grassy mound which surrounds it is kept fresh and verdant by the sparkling showers of a lucid fountain; and the pious cares of the gentle sisterhood preserve in their full vigour the beautiful myrtles, and other delicate shrubs which border the snow-white monumental urn. To the eye of fancy it would seem, on a fine moonlight evening,

(such a one as that in which I saw it,) to be the chosen haunt of some immaterial being, whose disembodied spirit yet lingered near its mortal dwelling-place. Fare thee well! I embark for England shortly, and will visit thy Caledonian retreat next summer, if I can so arrange my affairs.

Thy trusty Friend and Kinsman,

TEMPLE.

I have given the whole of this long epistle from Sir William Temple, an eminent statesman and philosopher in the reign of Charles the Second, in order that my readers may judge for themselves as regards the prudence of the Lady Grace in consigning to oblivion the latter pages which brought intelligence of a very vague and unsatisfactory nature. As the bare fact of the Lady Blanche becoming a mother was *alone* detailed, the apprehensions of the living one might have conjured up a host of torturing suspicions, relative to the legal claims of her own son, without considering the improbability that such a circum-

stance should have been passed over by the writer without comment.

The Lady Grace, by her virtuous self-denial, was spared all the irritating suspense which would doubtless have attended this indefinite communication—a suspense which would have rendered her future trials insupportable, and doubly aggravated the heavy affliction which awaited her.

The vessel in which her husband had signified his intention of returning to Scotland, after an absence of eighteen months, brought word that Sir Walter had been found poniarded in the streets of Lisbon one evening, by an unknown hand, and that his remains had been interred in the burial-ground of the English ambassador. His person was identified and sworn to by an English resident, who, after paying the last melancholy honours to the deceased, had left the country in disgust at the supineness and negligence of the government in allowing the miscreant to escape.

CHAPTER XI.

My way of life
Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf,
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not hope to have.

MACBETH.

LEAVING the Lady Grace to the solitary indulgence of afflictions, too sacred for idle declamation, let us return to Norman Abbey, and take a peep at the poor old baron, who was wont to observe that all his troubles sprang from that fatal night when the Royal Charlie and his loose courtiers played their wild pranks under the old abbey roof.

Bitterly was he heard to lament the sad defection of his beloved Grace, who had brought so

grievous a scandal upon her fair fame as to decamp with a foul homicide ; and he came to the magnanimous resolution of forbidding her name, even, to be mentioned in his presence.

Adversity, however, has a mollifying influence upon generous minds ; and when year after year, like the rolling of a stone from an eminence, bore him down the steep declivity of life under an accumulating weight of sorrow, he would look round in vain, and with a sort of wistful regret, for the gentle hand which had so long ministered to his wants. No one could smooth his pillow in sickness like Grace Macdonald, nor convey his gouty foot with so much cautious tenderness to the velvet stool, nor draw forth such merry sounds from the lumbering spinnet or shrill virginal on a long winter's evening.

Old prejudices are not easily removed, and will recur, in spite of an accidental crossing, and kindly feelings are of a very regenerating quality, springing up at a time when we had fancied them completely uprooted.

The baron, whose grey hairs should have descended quietly into the grave, after his stormy

and perilous manhood, found himself in his old age the withered and decayed root of a once flourishing tree.

Ever since the elopement of Grace, misfortune after misfortune had pressed hard upon him, and one calamity succeeded another, with the officious eagerness of the Patriarch's messengers, signing the death-warrant of his domestic enjoyments !

The first year brought him the mournful intelligence that his brother Robert, who commanded a small fleet, anchored at Portsmouth, had met with a cruel death, being crushed to a mummy between two vessels whilst in the act of passing from one to the other. The fourth year after this loss was ushered in by the sudden death of his only remaining son and heir, who fell the innocent victim of an insurrection which broke out at Dublin Castle, and in which the notorious Colonel Blood acted a conspicuous part. Three blooming boys and an infant daughter, his children, at different intervals, fell a prey to the malignancy of epidemic disease ; and the delicate Bertha, like a tender plant which has weathered the storm, was the sole survivor of a numerous progeny.

True, there were cousins to the second and third degree by the female side ; but they were a time-serving race, and had turned their backs upon their honourable kinsman in his adversity ; therefore he resolutely refused to see them, and kept himself shut up in his own apartments. Here he was carefully tended by Ralph, Margery, and Mattie ; the former of whom, in succeeding to the office of old Francis, brought with him all the zeal and fidelity which formerly distinguished the liege vassal of a feudal territory. The baron had been gradually declining ; less from the operation of time, and bodily sickness, than from the insidious operations of that consuming, withering anguish which imperceptibly saps the foundation of the most robust frame. He was now a complete hypochondriac, debilitated in body and enfeebled in mind. His little grand-daughter was the only visitor whom he would admit to the sick chamber, and her cheerful prattle was the only relief to a scene of constant gloom and melancholy ; for the unbounded vivacity of Bertha was proof, even against the dark curtains, the long visage of the baron, and all the dismal et-ceteras attached to a confirmed invalid.

Margery, like a true politician, was eloquent in her praises of the pretty Miss Bertha, whilst the ex-housekeeper would sometimes venture to wish that she had been a boy, or regret that the old abbey must, after all, pass into a strange name.

To all these occasional remarks, the poor old gentleman would heave a profound sigh, yet say nothing; and it was only by the knitting of his furrowed brow that the gossips knew they had touched upon an unwelcome theme.

Bertha, though deprived of the Norman property, was no mean heiress; for the valuable estates of Ravenstede and Dunmore passed by inheritance to the children of the second son, and their increasing wealth centred upon the only remaining branch. Bertha and her widowed parent had, for the last few years, been in the habit of residing alternately at both places.

Bertha, it must be confessed, had the greatest share in this arrangement; and for the sake of enjoying his little grand-daughter's society, the baron doggedly endured the tedium of her mother's wearisome attentions. Mistress Ruth, unfortunately, was no great favourite with the

baron—his aristocratic pride having been severely wounded by the plebeian choice of his son John, who had raised one of the daughters of the neighbouring tenantry to the head of his house.

The sudden excision of all other ties gave additional power to a parent's instinctive fondness, and the young heiress became the sole object of her mother's idolatry. The latter, who had been a belle of some notoriety in her own humble sphere, was delighted with the dawning beauty of her child, and with the foolish pride of an ignorant mind, poured into her ears, from morning to evening, the unmingled incense of coarse adulation. The good lady, who was, in many respects, a worthy personage, still pursued the duties of her early calling, and applied herself to domestic management with as much alacrity as if the prosperity of Ravenstede depended upon the careful picking of a goose, or the frugal saving of candle-ends. Whilst Bertha was seated in the wainscoted parlour, which overlooked the grassy lawn, cultivating the fashionable accomplishments of the day, under the tuition of a skilful preceptress, her mother was bustling and scolding the

maids, clear-starching and clapping her delicate lawns, or broiling over the fire to get up a substantial dinner for some vulgar guests of her own stamp and quality. Often, indeed, did she perform the most menial offices of the household; and never was she so much in her element as when, "up to the elbows in business," she sank into a complete family drudge.

As Bertha increased in years and acquirements, she began to feel a kind of shrinking disgust to the usual habits of the family. Though constantly told of her beauty and great expectations, as her mind expanded, she began to feel a relish for something higher, and already rejected, with an air of proud reserve, the familiar praises which were levied as an expected contribution from all the visitors at Ravenstede. Nothing delighted her half so much as when the day of their periodical visitation arrived, and mother and daughter took possession of the old tapestried chamber at the east wing of Norman Abbey.

If the weather was cold, or chilly, or damp, or *threatened* to be such, the never-failing cares of Mistress Margery would heap a blazing fire upon

the grate, and draw the old-fashioned screen, ornamented with quaint cut-out figures, from the recess in which it was usually stationed.

The cumbrous great chairs were dragged round the hearth ; whilst, half buried in damask cushions, the young and petted favourite would sit for hours listening to the legendary stories, with which Mattie or Margery were wont to entertain her, during the long winter evenings, whilst her mother was gone to relieve guard in the baron's apartment. At other times, if the weather was bland and clear from vapours, if the sun shone gaily through the gothic windows, or the birds sang merrily in the shrubbery, then would Mistress Margery open the casement to give her young lady's choice plants an airing, or to admit the luscious fragrance of the pale seringo. There, also, would Bertha sit on a summer's evening, watching the last rays of the departing sun gilding the peeping turrets of Ravenstede, and throwing a mellowed lustre upon the rich uplands of the surrounding plantations.

“It is all your own, miss !” would Margery exclaim. “Ah ! and this place should have been

yours, by good rights, only you happened to be born a girl instead of a boy. What a pity! Good lack-a-day! but it's sad to think all these goodly lands must go away to the Lord knows who; for I suppose Sir Walter's gone to his long reckoning at last. God have mercy upon's soul! it was a crying sin to murder his own cousin. Blood will have blood, they say; and the devil's a hard paymaster; so no wonder he's met wi' his match at last."

The innocent child looked aghast at a repetition of this horrible tale of the murder, with all its supplementary additions, which had, from infancy, made Sir Walter the "raw-head and bloody bones" of her youthful imagination. Turning her soft eye towards her own home, she would say, "I don't want this old priory, Margery, for they say my uncle Philip's ghost walks the cloisters at midnight; and Andrew showed me the floor, with the blood stains upon it, and he says not all the scrubbing in the world can make it white."

"Andrew's a foolish simpleton to tell you any such thing," replied the housekeeper, whose com-

plaisance extended no farther than her interest. "A ghost, forsooth! I wonder what business any such creatures have here. We've idle folks enow, stalking about wi' their hands afore 'em. I never saw a ghost yet, miss; and if I did, I'd make 'em budge off to the churchyard in a twinkling. A ghost, indeed! a fiddlestick!"

"You're not going away, Margery?" said Bertha, whose terrors increased with the deepening shadows of twilight; "do stay, I am so frightened—hush! hark! did you not hear a noise?"

"O! it's nothing but the rustling of the leaves," returned Margery, re-seating herself; "dear me, miss! how pale you look! for all the world like our poor young lady—God forgive her! who ran away with Sir Walter. Lack-a-daisy! what changes one lives to see! I declare, now, I could swear you were her own child, and it's like she's plenty by this time; that's a thought to stick in more throats than *one*, I opine; but it's their own look out, I care not a straw's breadth who gets the barony if the rents keep down." Margery's attention was here arrested by

the big drop trembling upon the silken lashes of Bertha's deep-blue eye. "So, my dear young lady," said she, in a caressing tone, "don't be scared; there's nothing to fear; nobody *could* be so cruel as to do you any harm. I'll teach them a different tale below," thought she, "than to terrify this dear child out of her senses, and set her against the place she used to be so fond of;" and pleased at the idea of having a rod in pickle wherewith to chastise the delinquents under her sovereign controul, Mistress Margery endeavoured to divert Bertha's fears by drawling out in measured stanzas a woe-begone ditty, which she had learnt in her younger days. Finding her pathetic narrative produce no better effect than that of bringing down the pearly dews in plentiful showers upon the young lady's cheek, she cut short her history, and began the well-known adventures of that famous outlaw, Robert Earl of Huntingdon; or, as he was nicknamed, Robin Hood.

Bertha insensibly grew interested in the valiant exploits of this noted freebooter and his merry archers, for, as a modern ditty testifies—

In summer time, when leaves grow green,
'Twas a merry sight to see,
Robin Hood had dress'd himself
And all his yeomandre.

He clothed himself in Lincoln green,
And his men in scarlet red,
Black hats—white feathers—all alike,
Now Robin Hood is rid.

But just as Mistress Margery came to the interesting part of his stolen nuptials with the Maid Marion, and was proceeding to give a full account of the marriage feast of the jolly friar who was pressed into the service of the bridegroom, together with the whole bridal paraphernalia, a rap at the door announced that a large party of the baron's kinsmen were arrived at the priory.

“Hey-day!” was Margery's first salutation to Ralph, who brought this unwelcome intelligence; “what's up now? They can't let the poor old soul rest now they know Sir Walter's clean gone out of the way: but there's a nest-egg somewhere that may hatch a Fontayne after all;

so they may turn to the right about, for I'm sure my lord will have nothing to say to 'em. They'll be cunning, indeed," thought she, "as gets to the speech of him," whilst ringing for the young lady's attendant, she adjusted her dress, and marched down stairs with no very gracious aspect. Margery was quite right in her conjectures, for the rumour of Sir Walter's death had brought together a whole posse of male candidates for the next vacancy, and female legacy hunters; the former intending to dispute their legal claims to the succession, and the latter anxious to secure a moiety of the personalty by insinuating themselves into the favour of the poor bed-ridden invalid. Various were the stratagems devised for the accomplishment of their plans, but in vain; the baron pertinaciously refused to see any one of the barbarous horde, which had stormed his castle, and swore, with a tremendous oath, that not a soul of them should ever be the better for his death.

During all this commotion Bertha's mother, who was of a very unambitious character, and naturally averse to strangers, very quietly took her leave of the poor old baron; and after commending

him to the united cares of Ralph and Margery, to whom she gave sundry directions about warm possets, diet drinks, &c., left the guests full possession of the old priory, and recommenced operations at Ravenstede. Now, it happened most fortunately for the exercise of her physical energies, that every fresh excursion to Norman Abbey provided a new series of domestic employments, and the refitting, new-regulating, and arrangement of her negligent household occupied the whole of the intermediate time, from one visit to another.

Bertha was now of an age to be seriously discomposed by these everlasting "setting to rights," these constant philippics against the maids' carelessness, or the men's drunken habits. She knew not how, nor whence it was, that the neighbouring gentry never came to Ravenstede; that the household was in a constant state of excitement from morning till night; and that, save the Rev. Josiah Metcalf, a neighbouring divine of convivial tastes and jovial temper, no person sat down to their plenteous board who would have been admitted higher than the second table at the priory. These things were yet a mystery to the young

heiress ; but her mother's unfailing attentions and caressing fondness secured her warmest interest in the bosom of her affectionate child, who was too young and inexperienced to perceive the disadvantages of her early education.

She spent the greatest part of her time in rambling over the woods, racing the timid deer across the park, or playing off some harmless practical joke at the farm-houses, where she was always sure of finding herself a welcome visitor, and her jests looked upon as oracular and sublime effusions by the good-natured and simple-hearted peasantry. Bertha found herself, at her early age, a privileged person, free to say or think what she pleased. She lived on enchanted ground ; the little realm around her was subject to her despotic sway ; and even her own parent disdained not to perform the most menial services for her comfort or caprice.

Is it to be wondered at that she should grow up with high ideas of her own importance ? True, the sweetness of Bertha's disposition prevented any injurious effect upon her manners. Her affability, her engaging address, and constitutional

flow of animal spirits, in fact, tended to increase the evil upon her character, by enlisting the feelings of the heart on the side of interest. "Every body loves our young lady," would the tenants say; "she is so pretty and so civil-spoken, and sits herself down among us as if she was at home like."

Surrounded by a little world of her own, Bertha never once dreamt of leaving Ravenstede, nor fancied a scene less favourable to the cultivation of virtuous habits, nor pictured to herself the possibility that a more polished state of society would poorly compensate for the loss of her early associates, nor that the recollection of her present happy state might add a pang to future sorrows.

Happy innocence of childhood! unconscious of its painful heritage of "losses, crosses, and ills too hard to bear!" heedless of the coming storm,—the impending thunderbolt, which levels the proudest oak, and passes by the humbler forest verdure!

In all her little excursions Bertha was accompanied by a young companion, a distant relative,

and whose ancestors had originally owned the lands which were now attached to Ravenstede. Rose Dunmore was about the same age as the young heiress, but of a more grave, meditative turn; and the instructions which she took in common with her made a deeper impression upon the inquiring mind of Rose than they did upon the more volatile temper of Bertha. The two companions were inseparable in their studies and amusements. The quiet manners of Rose, and the lively temper of Bertha, would have united them under circumstances less favourable than expediency. Rose was for a long time the only person whose family had made overtures of acquaintance, for the young heiress was not yet arrived at that period of life which might render her a desirable object of speculation to the designing or ambitious.

CHAPTER XII.

For there was never yet philosopher,
Who could endure the toothe-ache patiently ;
However they have writ the style of gods,
And made a pish at chance and suffering.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

As the autumn advanced, the baron grew rapidly worse, and was more discomposed than ever at the continued invasion of his domestic privacy. The guests, finding that there was no chance of his ultimate recovery, protracted their stay till the expected *dénouement* should take place. It is true the baron refused to admit them into his presence ; but they held long and frequent conferences with his steward ; made themselves quite at home in the priory ; and took an accurate sur-

vey of all goods and chattels belonging to the estate.

All this could not well be accomplished in perfect silence. The guests were not dumb; and, unfortunately for his bodily as well as mental repose, the poor baron was not deaf; so that the constant pacing of restless feet, the ringing of bells, clapping of doors, trampling of horses' hoofs through the clanging gateway, together with the yelling of his own hounds let loose in the court wild and impatient, under the dominion of strangers, became an actual misery to the poor invalid in his excited frame of mind, and helpless infirmity of body.

Though the baron had not lost his sense of hearing on these trying occasions, he turned deaf as a post to all overtures from his assiduous relatives, who beset him on all sides with tokens of loving recognition.

The most costly delicacies of the season were smuggled into his apartment, in hopes of tempting his sickly appetite, whilst the confidential domestics were each bribed by flattery adapted to their respective tastes. To Ralph, for instance,

a request to deliver a message or present was introduced by a long preamble, setting forth the very exalted opinion entertained by the speaker of Master Ralph's invaluable services, and long-trying attachment to his lord and master. To Mistress Margery an ardent hope was expressed that the poor dear baron had remembered his faithful servants in his last will and testament, which said allusion was usually accompanied by a trifling remuneration for the additional trouble their residence at the abbey must have occasioned the worthy and respected supervisor; a donation which not only evinced a laudable gratitude for past services, but was an earnest of the future harvest which this worthy personage might expect to reap, in case they succeeded to the honours and wealth attached thereto.

Many a "nod and beck, and wreathed smile," did poor Mattie, the simple and warm-hearted, encounter in her way to the sick man's apartment. Sometimes a fair arm would offer its support as she ascended the lofty staircase, whilst a gentle voice would insinuate into her ears—"My good Mistress Hanstead, do you not think I could

just step into the room with you, and pay my respects to the poor dear baron. I should be distressed beyond measure, when he is gone, to think that I had never seen him ; it looks so unnatural." The kind-hearted woman would courteously accept the escort as far as the antechamber, but here she was obliged to make an uncourteous pause ; for the orders of the baron against the admission of strangers were so peremptory, that she dared not run the risk of disturbing his last moments by disobeying these commands.

" Besides," as the old woman rightly judged upon reflection, whilst rocking herself one evening at twilight by the fire-side, with her eyes drowsily closing and unclosing their heavy lids lest slumber should unwarily visit them, " how comes it to pass that all these fine gentry below never thought about the puir saul afore ? Sure enough, he wanted comfort under sic heavy dispensations as hae befallen him o' late ; an yet, not a mither's bairn o' them a' kent or cared a strae about the matter. Sae, what gars them plague him now ? Odds ! it's a query that—I dinna ken !"

She sat listening to the low moans and broken exclamations of the baron, whose convulsive starts at every noise, and nervous agitation as he twitched the bed-curtains aside to detect some unauthorised visitor, betokened his extreme mental anxiety, till she began to feel a degree of superstitious alarm at such an unquiet death-bed. Glancing her eye through the gloomy extent of the long gallery, faintly visible from the aperture of the half-closed door, which admitted a stream of mellowed light from the opposite painted window, she fell into a train of solemn and heart-stirring reflections upon the bereaved and lost condition of the baron.

“The Lord be mercifu’!” ejaculated she mentally, “but it’s unco sad, and a fearfu’ thing to dee. Gin there wa’ ony body to speak the *word* to him, it wadna grieve me; but to see him gang to his lang hame and nae pray’r put forth in his behalf, is quite heathenish: as auld Peter says, ‘we a’ hae sinned and come short;’ and though the puir auld baron has been a gude master and a bountifu’ steward o’ God’s outward gifts, sic as siller and dross, or the like, yet ilka body kens

he 's been o'er free in his leevin', and muckle gi'en to ungodly revelling and carnal company. Weel, Peter may be right after a' ; for he 's quite a gift that gait :—troth, æ thing 's plain as noonday, he 's gotten a sair trick o' takin' strange aiths, and he is na aisy in his mind ; I wuss he wad be advisit to mak' a clean breast o't."

The substance of these reflections was detailed separately to Ralph and Margery, till, after a private committee held in the antechamber during a longer slumber than ordinary of the invalid, it was resolved forthwith that Peter, who was chief spokesman in the deliberation, should look out for a suitable person to administer such ghostly counsel as the exigences of the case required ; which was more especially needful, as the vacant office of the late chaplain had never yet been supplied.

The loss of this worthy member of the orthodox church, whose situation had dwindled down into a mere sinecure, created no particular sensation in the household ; and it was only at times, when Ralph, through pure absence of mind, as he performed his customary duties at table, would invo-

luntarily direct his attentive eye towards the chaplain's vacant seat, that he recollected the Reverend Master Jocelyn Dewlap was in the land where there is neither "eating nor drinking, nor giving in marriage." This late minor chasm in his establishment was more sensibly felt by the baron, who, like all persons of a positive and arbitrary bearing, had a great veneration for the passive qualities of the inoffensive chaplain, and always pronounced a warm panegyric upon the excellency of his judgment, and the solidity of his understanding, concluding with this memorable observation in proof of both—"I don't think he ever contradicted me in all his life!"

It was perhaps owing to this free, social, and pacific disposition, that the chaplain showed such a propensity to linger over the bottle, and to indulge rather more liberally in his diet than might be consistent with a sound frame of body.

Unfortunately, he lived in an era of comparative darkness—an age when dyspeptic complaints were not the universal subject of conversation and investigation. It is more than probable, had he lived in these enlightened days, when the whole

arcana of medical science is unveiled, and treatises on the most intricate diseases spring up like mushrooms, he would never have fallen a victim to convivial enjoyments; but, on the contrary, have lived to a good and very respectable old age, by the constant application of those admirable systems which promise a prolongation of existence at the expense of hourly comfort, and where future advantage is in an inverse ratio to actual realization!

But, to return to the privy council in the bedroom. The death of the chaplain, the alarming posture of affairs, together with Peter's biblical knowledge and skill in propounding and expounding theological syllogisms, which gave him a preponderating influence in all difficult cases, now rendered him a fit person to deliberate on this particularly awful crisis, and gave him a prominence above his fellow-servants of a higher quality.

He was, from his age, long standing in the family; and devotional habits, an oracle on such occasions; and accordingly he held forth with all the zeal of an apostle, and the quaint simplicity of an inspired prophet.

“ Ye are right, Master Ralph—it ’s very true, Mistress Margery—all that ye say, and it does my heart good to hear ye so earnest in the things which concern his everlasting peace; but I cannot belie my conscience so far as to wish our gracious master such a counsellor as him who is dead and gone—God rest his soul! I mean no wrong to his memory; but woe is me! he was a ‘ blind leader of the blind ;’ a slothful shepherd, slumbering over his flock—one who would ‘ heal the wound of the daughter of my people’ slightly—ready to prophesy smooth things—living in blind-folded ignorance, and carnal security—wrapt up in Egyptian darkness, unenlightened, unregenerated!—No!—praised be the Lord, who saveth souls as by a miracle, and who hath now made a gap for the true gospel, as he did for the Israelites of old, when he opened a passage for them through the Red Sea, leading them out of that idolatrous land, where they were a long time held in bondage, and guiding them by a heavenly light till they reached the promised Canaan, which, I take, doth typify the new Jerusalem. Now, if ye want a godly saint—one of the Lord’s chosen peo-

ple—one who will not prophesy falsely, like him of old, who was sent to execute vengeance against the house of Jeroboam—one who will not say ‘peace! peace! when there is no peace!’ nor put bitter for sweet, nor sweet for bitter, I pray ye send for Master Nathaniel Childe, the worthy curate of Birkendale—an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile, for the root of the matter is in him!”

Old Peter, who had raised his voice to an emphatic pitch, here paused to take breath, and, dropping his head upon his bosom, sat with folded arms resting upon his knees, murmuring forth a prayer for the prosperity of his master’s house, the welfare of his immortal soul, and the comfortable assurance of faith to all who “mourn in Sion!”

There are times in one’s existence which seem to unveil futurity, and show us the nothingness and emptiness of those visible objects which so habitually monopolise our sensual affections—times in which forms and appliances sink into their original insignificance, placing all mankind upon a level, as children of the same common parent, sprung from the same source, and destined to the same end. Persons but rarely under the

influence of these solemn impressions look with a degree of superstitious veneration upon those deeply imbued with the doctrines which appertain to a future state, and, in particular seasons of excitement, cling to them (be they high or low) as an ignorant voyager does to the experienced mariner, who knows by the marks on his chart, and the points of his compass in what direction he ought to steer.

The subordinate condition of old Peter was forgotten; the strong prejudice occasionally excited against his puritanical zeal died away, and his mute hearers, as they gazed upon his grey locks and sunken eyes, now closed in the full absorption of devotion, inwardly acknowledged that there was something in all this they had never felt so deeply before. A more saddened expression crept over the sober visage of Ralph; Mattie said a loud "amen" to the prayers of Peter; whilst Margery, "albeit unused to the melting mood," took up one corner of her flowered apron to disperse an obtrusive tear!

A silence of some moments ensued, till the quick ears of the housekeeper caught a slight

cough from the adjoining room. Hastily wiping her eyes, she left off sentimentalising, and approached the bedside of her master. The baron had evidently been in an uneasy slumber, for he stared wildly around as he unclosed his eyes, and was not, at first, sensible of her presence.

“Take it away, I say,” cried he, in a low smothered tone, “it lies across me like a sheet of lead. Hough! hough!” gasped the poor baron, “I can’t get a breath.—Avaunt, thou dismal-looking thing!”

“The Lord be good unto us!” said Ralph, who had followed the women to the door; “but it ’s well-nigh o’er with him now; the old boggard ’s come again.”

“Pooh!” replied the incredulous, iron-hearted Margery, “it ’s nothing but the night-mare—the *best* ghost I ever *saw*, and the *worst* I’d ever wish to *feel*!”

Mattie agreed in this supposition, “because,” argued she, “if it had been a death-warning for the lord o’ Sherwood, the puir saul wad hae been the last to hae kent it himsel.—Weel! aweel!

it 's time ye sent for the minister, for ane gait or t'ither, he has na lang to leeve."

How this matter was to be accomplished was the next point under consideration. The baron, though he avowed a great respect for religion in general, and was a wonderful stickler for the rules and ceremonies of the canon law, which he held quite necessary to bridle the wandering fancies, and vain conceits of ignorant pretenders, would have thought it beneath his dignity to receive any other intimations of his duty than what were conveyed through the medium of prescribed forms, issuing from the lips of authorised agents. Now, though the minister of Birkendale was a member of the national church, and as much inclined to deify her institutions as the baron himself, the latter was, nevertheless, a stranger to his person, and ignorant of his character, any further than as related to his imputed puritanism—no recommendatory quality (as we have before observed) to the favour of a staunch royalist like the baron.

Whilst Ralph and Margery retired to execute

their functions below, poor Mattie sat pondering over the difficulty of hinting to Lord Fontayne the necessity of spiritual instruction and godly consolation; “whilk,” observed she, “is a’ the same thing as telling him he isna fit to dee!”

As the old woman lifted up her eyes, she perceived, by the strong light which the freshly trimmed lamp threw upon the bed, that the baron was wide awake, and had fixed his keen eye upon her, as if he had already penetrated her charitable intentions, and was determined to act for himself in so important a case.

“You have not read a chapter to me, my good Mattie, for this long time,” said he, gently drawing aside the curtain.—“I like to hear a comforting word or two of Scripture better than all the preaching in the world. I hate your long-winded discourses, where—a—thou—sand absurd—i—ties are father’d upon—a single text.—But,” said the poor baron, sinking on his pillow, “I’m fairly done up—my breath’s gone—Ah! we must all come to this!”

“Your honour kens I wad be o’er proud to

read the word," said Mattie, in answer to the baron's first observation; "but my een arena sae clear as they were twenty year aback; and being bred i' the north countrie, ye ken I dinna speak out cannily; however, I maunna be fashed to do your lordship's bidding; sae I'll ettle at it."

In pursuance of this laudable resolution, Mattie proceeded softly, and gently, to fetch a large ponderous folio, covered with gilt parchment, from the old-fashioned bookcase at the other end of the room; and, adjusting her barnacles upon her long thin nose, with scrupulous exactness, so as to preserve their due equilibrium on such a perilous surface, she began to examine the records of Holy Writ. Mattie's employment was a literal fulfilment of that holy precept "Search the Scriptures." She kept turning leaf after leaf, in the anxious desire to pitch upon the most edifying passage; and growing still more embarrassed at every turn, as well as diffident of her own judgment and elocutionary powers, she hemmed and hawed, and tuned her querulous voice, till the poor baron's patience was fairly worn out.

"What are ye about?" cried he peevishly,

“Isn’t it all good from Genesis to Revelations? I want no picking and choosing, as if you were preaching at a conventicle. Let us have one of King David’s Psalms—that will do as well as any thing else. What a fellow was he for routing his enemies and putting them all to utter confusion! Ah! ah! I wish little Davie had been with us in the parliament wars—old Noll’s psalm-singers would have got a proper dressing: though it is sad to think,” added the poor baron, heaving a deep sigh, “of Absalom’s unnatural rebellion, and all the discord which sprang up in his family. Heigho! Solomon, his son and successor, doth wisely say, ‘a man’s foes are they of his own household.’ Sure enough cause have I to say that never was there a truer word spoken by man, woman, or child!”

“And yet,” replied Mattie, who shrewdly guessed in what direction her master’s thoughts lay, “that vera moment David grievit sairly for Absalom, sayin’, ‘Wad God I had died for thee, my son, my son!’”

“Mattie,” said the baron, rising up in bed with a sudden effort, “I’ve lived to see all my worldly

comforts plucked up by the roots, and nothing remaineth for me but to die in peace. This I cannot do till I have ascertained the state and condition of that poor forlorn child of mine, as I always used to call her. I have been much disturbed about her in my dreams of late, and it hath strongly possessed my mind that Walter, my esteemed brother Hubert's child, hath left an heir. Ring for Ralph," continued the baron, with the supernatural energy which often precedes immediate dissolution, "and let a special messenger be forthwith despatched to Scotland with letters to the poor widow. I'm much mistaken if Grace will refuse my late forgiveness (though she has a proud heart of her own) when she hears I am a dying man."

At these words the old housekeeper looked as if she could scarcely credit her senses, and clasping her hands together in an ecstasy of joyful surprise, exclaimed, "Now, Heaven bless ye, my lord, and smooth your journey to the land o' the leal! it shall be done forthwith. But, I'm thinkin'," said she thoughtfully, "how it is to be done after a', for your lordship is na fit to put pen to paper,

and the chaplain's gane far awa, puir gentleman!—and Ralph canna be spareit—and it's out o' all rational thought for Peter to undertak' the journey now the winter's setten. Forbye, he kens mair o' th' concerns o' th' t'ither world, and mak's but a puir hantlin' o' aught, but daen an orra jib or sae about the house. The puir cratur's memory's well-nigh gane about common affairs; but prick him wi' Scripture, and he'll gie ye a sarmon twa hours lang; there's ne'er a text ye can name as wad fash him, tho' Margery's o'er snell wi' him whiles, and says it wad put up the birse of a saunt to see him mak' sic a hishmahosh o' things. Sure eneugh, he wadna kill the auld gander, whan it was sair wanted, and he spilt the blude, sae that Margery couldna mak' goose-puddings: but behold ye, Peter backit it a' wi' a text, saying, 'it wa' reckon'd a crying sin in the auld Testament to ait the blude o' ony creature, whilk is the life.' ”

“ Peter's a sad Puritan,” replied the baron; “ nevertheless, he's a good honest fellow at bottom, and a faithful servant; so I should not wish him to be fretted by any of the idle villains below,

who have neither the fear of God nor man before their eyes. Tell Margery so, from me, and desire her to make less noise; her tongue runs like a water-mill."

"I'm thinking," mused Mattie, "if I might be sae bauld as to advise your lordship, there couldna be a better hand to send on a matter o' trust than the minister o' Birkendale, wha has a family of his ain, and is moreover a vera weel-bred, discreet person, and weel inclined to your lordship's gude, seeing that he hath, aye of his ain accord, besought the prayers of his congregation for the speedy recovery of your lordship's health, in all devout submission to the will of Heaven."

"Humph!" returned the baron, "I know nothing of the schoolmaster; has he not a parcel of infernal mischievous youngsters to take care of? I shall have my park-rails entirely destroyed soon, if Gilbert does not look sharper after them."

"The schoolmaster has punishit them vera severely I understand," returned Mattie, "and dischargit them frae coming into your lordship's manors."

"O! I don't want to spoil sport," said the

relenting baron, "only let them keep off the fences."

"Bairns will be bairns, ye ken," said Mattie, in a persuasive tone, "but it is na the minister's faute; he winna hae ony body set their face aboon lawfu' authority, and Peter tells me his last sermon was upon thae words, 'Render unto Cesar the things that be Cesar's.' It 's my mind he wad be free to gang this errand, for he thinks as muckle or mair about warks o' charity as about prayin'; and its halliday time, ye ken."

"Right! right!" echoed the baron, in a firm voice; "who knows but Providence has sent this worthy man (I doubt not he *is* a good man after all, Mattie) to the relief of my necessities? I will that Ralph be despatched instantly to Birkendale, with my friendly salutation to the Reverend Master Childe, praying him to hasten forthwith to the abbey, that I may consult with him on matters of importance; and let him put up—stay," said the baron, hesitating, "I will not send at this present time; I would not seem to bribe any man's good offices. Alas! alas!" sighed the poor exhausted invalid, "I should have thought about this worthy

curate before ; but we are ever neglectful of our duty till the evil days come, bringing our sins to remembrance !”

“ It is never too late to mend,” thought Mattie, who overheard his faint soliloquy, as she stole out of the room ; “ and if the puir saul is willing to dee in peace and charity wi’ a’ men, he’ll na be dealt hardly wi’ for his short-comings, it ’s my belief.”

CHAPTER XIII.

A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich, with forty pounds a-year;
Remote from towns, he ran his godly race,
Nor e'er had chang'd, nor wish'd to change his place;
Unskilful he, to fawn, or seek for pow'r
By doctrines fashion'd to the varying hour;
Far other aims, his heart had learn'd to prize,
More skill'd to raise the wretched than to rise.

GOLDSMITH'S DESERTED VILLAGE.

THE steward, with all the self-importance of a confidential domestic, set off on his mission, and after crossing about a dozen fields, opening upon a wide common, soon came within sight of the neighbouring hamlet. It consisted of two or three moderately-sized farm-houses; a few small thatched cottages, inhabited by labourers; an antique pile of venerable aspect, on the summit of a hill at three fields'

distance ; and a nondescript sort of building, designated a parsonage, midway between both.

Bending his steps in the direction of the last-mentioned habitation, which he knew to be the schoolmaster's dwelling, Ralph crossed a stile attached to the side of the large folding-doors, and entered a spacious farm-yard stocked with about a dozen head of cattle. His entrance was greeted by the loud barking of a surly mastiff ; the cautious greetings of a purblind shepherd dog, whose circumambulating motions impeded his advances ; the sudden flight of a covey of pigeons settled upon a hovel ; the shrill neighing of a young colt ; the braying of an ass in the straw yard ; and the discontented snortings of the swinish herd.

Almost stunned by the deafening sounds from the farm-yard, and cudgelling his staff in defiance of "Vixen" and "Mopsey," Ralph strode on to the inner court, which was denominated, by way of distinction, the "play-ground." No human creature made its appearance ; but as he passed the barn-door the heavy strokes of the resounding flail told that the thrasher was busy at work, although the partial closing of the upper compart-

ment to exclude, as much as possible, the biting air of a keen frost, concealed the person of old Giles, the farming man at the parsonage. The house had been enlarged at different times, and at various intervals, according to the increasing wants and pecuniary resources of the present worthy and enterprising incumbent. It was, in truth, a thriving house, being eked out at all ends and corners, as if the owner had every now and then said to himself, "Hem! the world has gone well with me; the Lord hath blessed me in the field and in the vineyard. I will not, like the fool of old, 'pull down my barns and build new ones;' but I will add 'another cubit to their stature,' that my children and my children's children may know that the Lord hath dealt bountifully with me, and be constrained to say, 'Truly God is gracious unto Israel, even to such as are of a pure heart and clean hands, and have not lifted up their eyes unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully by their neighbour.'"

Whether the modesty and habitual austerity of self-denial practised by the good curate would have carried him thus far on the high road to

spiritual pride, may be doubted; but it is certain, that these sentiments were always excited in the minds of those devout individuals who were secret witnesses of his benevolence, and who professed to owe their greatest worldly blessings, and their highest immortal hopes to the curate of Birken-dale and his zealous ministry.

But to return to the subject: the whole range of patch-work buildings presented so many inequalities, jutting angles, and projecting roofs, that Ralph stood a moment to consider which, of the numerous fragments, could possibly be the habitable part of this uncouth dwelling. At this moment a door thickly studded with nails, from whence descended a flight of steps, flew open, and a whole tribe of busy urchins, released from the pedant's iron rule, now rushed forth in one simultaneous movement, and vaulting with brisk alertness over the shoulders of their loitering companions, raced away to the allotted field of exercise.

Here nothing could be heard, except a confused mixture of shouts and loud huzzas, proceeding from the various groups engaged in pitching,

wrestling, or the mimic sport of "hunting the stag."

Some of the younger and less athletic members were hard at work upon a patch of frozen earth, which, by dint of restless pacing, they had converted into a slide. A pale shivering urchin, who had remained an inactive spectator of the hardy exercises which engaged every faculty and thought of his more robust comrades, was in woeful cogitation respecting an unfinished task, and now gazed with more than ordinary curiosity upon the steward, in hopes that the strange gentleman would beg them a holiday, and by that means enable him to elude so disagreeable an affair altogether. Ralph, whose powdered wig, rich doublet, and handsome appointments, gave him more the appearance of a country squire than a serving man, was, however, soon recognised by the rest of the community. "It's the steward from the priory," soon ran through the little circle, and a herald was instantly despatched to acquaint the mistress.

Master Ralph, whose modesty it seems had led him into the back-ground, as is not often the case now-a-days, was ushered with many apologies

through the menial offices into a large old-fashioned parlour with a bay window, projecting into a garden, or rather wilderness; the worthy hostess having a more invincible dislike to the fall of timber than to damp walls and an unproductive soil. The umbrageous shadows of the chestnut, elder, and tufted firs, which grew on each side of the middle gravelled path, threw a cavern-like gloom upon the apartment, whilst the ceiling was so low as to endanger the well-mounted cranium of the portly steward, and bring down a hasty ejaculation from the terror-struck hostess, as the obtruding beam shook a plentiful shower of artificial dust from Master Ralph's best wig. The comely hostess insisted upon his taking a glass of her best cordial, whilst she dismissed one of her numerous retinue to, "step into the Latin school, and tell her master he was wanted in great speed;" to which was added a caution, in a low tone, "not to stay by the way."

This message found the Reverend Master Nathaniel Childe, who plied the united trades of parson, schoolmaster, and agriculturist, in the parish of Birkendale, at his writing-desk, laboriously employed in deciphering a huge pile of exercises,

written in characters of graduatory proficiency, both as regards penmanship and classical ability, from the pot-hook scrawl to the wide-mouthed copperplate; and, from the *hic hæc hoc* of some raw beginner, to the more learned translator of Cæsar's Commentaries. The sapient and care-worn tutor was so deeply immersed in his studies, that the message had been twice sounded in his ears by the cherry-cheeked dairy-maid before he could collect his bewildered faculties sufficiently to return for answer that he would obey her mistress's summons in ten minutes. We shall employ this interval in describing the scholastic territory, which consisted of three separate apartments. The furthest of these was fitted up as a school-library, and was well stocked with samples of the most unexceptionable authorship; amongst which, as might be expected, theological works bore an honourable proportion. There were numerous translated versions of the ancient Fathers, as well as the more recent productions of modern divines of the reformed church, French, German, and English; whilst in a separate book-case, concealed from vulgar gaze, were ranged "Bernard's Ser-

mons," "Thomas à Kempis," "Saint Augustine's Confessions," and Luther's celebrated controversy on "Free Will." The rest of the library was filled up with odds and ends of polite literature; volumes of trite philosophy, inculcating every sage and moral precept which could be supposed likely to put "old heads upon young shoulders." To these were added a little sprinkling of anecdote and witticism, indulgently allowed in compassion to the weakness of human nature by the worthy minister, who was not secretly indisposed to facetiousness, and loved to recreate himself with an innocent joke. To sum up the contents of this repository, whose fame amongst the surrounding district exceeded that of the Alexandrian library, there were hoards of loose pamphlets, homilies, and detached sermons, with quaint and mystic titles, intended for circulation amongst the more erudite portion of the curate's congregation; whilst the remaining sides of the room were occupied with piles of materials of every possible description that could facilitate the acquirement of knowledge—reams of paper, the whole year's produce of some notable goose merchant; reading, writing,

and arithmetical books in rich and tempting abundance to the poor bookworm scholar, who would often steal a sidelong glance at these treasures of wisdom, in covert breach of the tenth commandment, as he replaced the borrowed volume. Yet was it but a half wish after all, for the good curate "hid not his talent," whatever it might be, "in a napkin;" and the poor, the widowed, and the fatherless, were sure to meet with their appropriate consolations, secretly and ungrudgingly bestowed. He fed the hungry, clothed the naked, instructed the ignorant, administered spiritual remedies to the diseased in soul, raised from a state of chilling depression the drooping child of affliction, and fostered, by his generous patronage, the humble son of genius. "Happy, though comparatively obscure being," perhaps the enthusiastic reader may exclaim, "more honourable art thou than if princes had called thee sire, or nobles claimed thine alliance, for thy deeds are writ in imperishable records, and future generations shall rise up to call thy children blessed!"

Let us not sully the brightness of this aspiration by a single breath of cold suspicion. Let

us hope, for the honour of human nature, that such might be the case. Such assuredly it was in the former part of the prophetic apostrophe ; and if the latter clause was fulfilled less in the spirit than the letter of the Christian law, we must recollect that gratitude is a plant of very delicate growth on this terrestrial soil, requiring much culture and dexterous management, very liable to shoot out in wild and irregular excrescences, and more prone to bear flowers than fruits.

Pardonnez moi! critical reader, I am apt to digress, and forget that I did not set off with the intention of writing a disquisition upon gratitude, but to take a survey of the exterior regions which conjured up these vagrant thoughts, and of which two apartments remain undescribed. The inner one was appropriated to the tuition of the higher classes, deep skilled in ancient lore, and familiarised with names of reverential import even to the most experienced pedant, whose delicate ears would have been shocked at the vulgar freedoms taken with the renowned authors of antiquity ; or his eyes still more scandalised at seeing the sublime effusions of Virgil, Cicero, or Horace,

effaced by illegible scrawls, greasy thumb-marks, and dogs'-ears, or placed cheek by jowl with all the lumbering apparatus of a schoolboy.

The last of this suit of apartments was of considerable extent, and furnished with writing-frames, reaching from one extremity to the other, flanked with wooden benches, on which were carved sundry characters, executed at different times, and with more or less skill by divers of those destructive small gentry, who seem to consider that they were sent into the world for no wiser purpose than to torture the animate works of nature, or disfigure those of mechanical creation.

A desk, of a more contracted size, but loftier height, filled up both sides of the wide range, in front of which sat the subordinate authorities, with a load of copy-books before them, on which their fingers, swifter than the weaver's shuttle, traced the boundary of the quill's wide march. On an adjoining shelf lay the awful insignia of their office—rods of birchen twigs, and the pedagogue's sceptre, the ancient terror-striking ferula. The mighty owner of this classic realm was a man of a pale, saturnine cast of countenance, slightly

marked with the smallpox, of a diminutive stature, and rather corpulent habit of body. There was much of intelligence and shrewdness in his dark-grey eye, a stern air of thoughtfulness on his marked brow, and no inconsiderable share of benevolence, hilarity, and frankness in the open smile which occasionally relaxed the unbending muscles of his serious physiognomy. He was a man who, in spite of his undignified exterior, had found means to inspire that equal proportion of fear and love, which prove such needful adjuncts to power and fame in every situation of life; and so well, and so judiciously had his influence been applied, that there was not a magistrate or petty justice of the peace for forty miles round, whose decision on points of equity would give half so much satisfaction to the neighbouring peasantry as the righteous arbitration of their reverend pastor. Not a little of this popularity was derived from the open-handed generosity and free-hearted hospitality of the worthy minister, who was always observed to strengthen his pious precepts by the addition of a weighty *douceur*. Unlike many modern flaming professors of the liberal and

almsgiving doctrines of Christianity, he did not confine his zeal to the distribution of spiritual counsel and succour. He was a physician of the *body* as well as the *soul*; and though he followed the apostolic injunction by showing more especial favour to those who were of "the household of faith," yet was he always ready to distribute to the necessities of all, even to the lowest and most degraded of his species. The curate of Birkendale, as I have before observed, was not a man of very majestic proportions; but, to compensate for this deficiency, nature had bestowed upon him a most liberal and enlarged mind. His name was not graced by any high-sounding titles; but he had a most magnificent spirit, scattering his bounty around with the lavish profuseness of princely generosity and patriarchal simplicity; not in the recklessness of criminal improvidence, but in a simple trust and unhesitating confidence on those divine promises, "He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord." "I have been young, and now am old, yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread."

Yet was he superior to the petty arts by which ordinary minds seek to obtain fame. He never courted popularity ; but, on the contrary, wisely shunned a temptation which might have infringed upon the purity of his motives. A simple follower of his Divine Master and Lawgiver, “ he went about doing good,” without any other incitement than the dictates of pure disinterested benevolence, and frequently without any other reward than the satisfaction of having performed a positive duty, and the consciousness that he was, in some degree, lessening the sum of human misery by his active philanthropy. These feelings, enthusiastical and visionary as they may appear to some, led the curate of Birkendale to the sick-bed of the poor cottager at all hours, and in the most inclement seasons ; urged him to the most laborious exertions in his public ministry, the most devotional habits in his family, and the most unremitting diligence in the duties of his civil calling. His zeal carried him still farther, leading him to penetrate remote districts and barren wastes thinly scattered with human habitations, to visit and instruct a race of beings, differing from the

savage tribes of a less cultivated hemisphere only by their superior brutalised stolidity !

Such was the insignificant-looking personage before whom Master Ralph, the major-domo of the priory, now stood uncovered, in the act of proffering one of his lowest and most prolonged courtesies, which the worthy divine received with a mingled portion of self-command and courteous approbation, which would have done honour to a more distinguished embassy. As matters stood, however, the good curate never dreamt of a more important honour to be conferred upon him than what was included in the long and somewhat pompous harangue of the steward. An invitation to Norman Abbey, dated from head-quarters, was quite an event in his uneventful life. To hold a personal conference with its noble owner,—to be admitted, not only into the presence, but into the confidence of a person who had enjoyed the favour of royalty—was far beyond his soaring imagination, and to a less spiritualised frame of mind would have opened a wide field of ambition, not only as regarded schemes of worldly policy, but the humbler, though not less piquant wish,

to rival the proud boast of a neighbouring squire, who (lucky wight!) had “seen a man, who had known a man, who had seen the Duke of York!”

Pour chasser le badinage—The poor curate had such a horror of popery that I do verily believe he would have starved upon the slender receipts of his stipendiary allowance rather than have accepted the richest benefice which came from the patronage of Prince James; and it was, perhaps, this ultra spirit of protestantism which prejudiced him in the minds of his superiors in rank, amongst whom was the Baron Fontayne.

To casual observers there might be some ground for suspicion, as the zealous exertions and laborious offices of the curate were in striking contrast to the indolent supineness and sluggish indifference of his brethren around him; who, as a natural consequence with “lovers of ease and pleasure,” felt his example a great reproach to their own sensual habits and immoral indulgences. There were, besides, other reasons for convicting him of puritanism, if not of downright heresy. He was accustomed to circulate, as I before ob-

served, certain tracts and papers of a serious character; nay, he has been known to drop them on the king's highway for the benefit of the careless passenger. Moreover, for the more comfortable accommodation and benefit of his own family, as well as the edification of his scattered flock during their hours of leisure, the indefatigable minister was wont to assemble a large congregation on stated evenings in the spacious school-room before mentioned, where he was wont to expound the Scriptures, &c.

These practices being looked upon with a jealous eye by those whose empty sanctuaries announced their waning popularity, were wilfully placed in an insulated point of view, and censured accordingly. They were denounced by the loose and immoral part of his congregation. His doctrines were condemned as heterodox, whilst his harmless practices were represented as dangerous innovations, more fatal to the established faith than popery itself. He was considered, though a nominal member of the national church, to be no better than a nonconformist at heart—a supposition

which acquired strength from his being a practical holder of the doctrine which enjoins Christians "to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." To these unqualified charges the Rev. Master Nathaniel Childe opposed something *more* than the "answer of a blameless life." He was human, and of course fallible ; the accusation of disloyalty to a church for which, in days of religious persecution, he would have been the first to suffer martyrdom, touched him to the quick, and irritated his susceptible nerves ; he was wounded in a way, and to a degree, unknown to the caressed and almost idolised preacher of the gospel in modern times, whose ministerial path is strewed with roses, and paved with golden offerings from the shrine of Mammon. Far different indeed was the lot of the obscure individual whose virtues are but faintly transcribed in these pages !

He neither sought distinction, nor did honours come to him unsought. Truly might he say, in the language of the independent apostle, "These hands have ministered to my necessities," when the pitiful receipts of his pastoral office were in-

sufficient to the demands of benevolence which crowded upon him on each succeeding sabbath. With so few outward encouragements, is it to be wondered at if the brimstone of these unjust sarcasms kindled an unholy blaze in the pacific bosom of the zealous man of God, who would strenuously assert with great spirit, that he was consulting the real interests of the national faith better than those who condemned him; that the treasonable papers which he vended were devout and approved homilies, compiled by the reformers of the English church; and as a proof of his unshaken loyalty and deference to “the powers that be,” would triumphantly appeal to the various sentences of Holy Writ traced on the walls of the school-room,—“Fear God and honour the king;” “Obey them which have the rule over you;” “Submit yourself to every ordinance of man, for the Lord’s sake;” “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers;” “Fear God, and keep his commandments?”

Yet the testimony of these divine and moral precepts was altogether overlooked, or superciliously rejected; and the reverend tutor, feared by

his enemies, respected by his equals, and loved by his inferiors, was not without that necessary "thorn in the flesh" to chastise the insolence of undue spiritual exaltation.

CHAPTER XIII.

Death's shafts fly thick ! here falls the village swain,
And there his pamper'd lord ! the cup goes round,
And who so artful as to put it by ?

BLAIR'S GRAVE.

Where now, ye lying vanities of life !
Where are ye now ?

IBID.

UNDER the influence of such sentiments as were professed by the curate of Birkendale, it may be well supposed that the approaching interview gave rise to many serious reflections on his way to the priory.

He was too good a Christian to slight the duties of the closet when leisure (which to him was a pearl of great price) invited him to serious contemplation ; and he was also too practical a

believer to waste that time in idle speculation which could be more profitably employed in the active duties of his pastoral office.

The present undertaking was a special work of charity,—a labour of love which demanded immediate attention ; therefore he had without a moment's hesitation at his own unfitness, or want of due preparation, complied with the baron's urgent request.

His good lady, however, having the temporal concerns of an overgrown family under her superintendence was, of course, less absorbed in spiritual feelings, and with the ready zeal of a careful Martha, hastened to prepare such a change of apparel for her husband as she deemed a proper concession to the rank of the noble baron.

Accordingly she aired with her own hands a clean shirt (not daring to trust her giddy maidens in a matter so important) ; then laid out the minister's best suit of sable apparel, and next proceeded to draw from beneath the folds of a large family Bible his snow-white lawn bands ; and fastening a pair of choice silver buckles to his shoes, saw her good man depart with the steward under a secret feeling of exultation she could ill suppress.

Peter, who was porter at the great hall-door, made a profound obeisance as the minister entered, and reckless of the piercing cold accompanying the drifting snow, stood with his bald head uncovered.

“Go in, my good Peter,” said the considerate minister, at the same time eying Andrew’s distorted figure and shrivelled features compassionately.

“He’s a poor lad my master keeps about the place to do odd jobs, an’ tak’ care o’ the poultry,” replied Peter, in answer to the inquiring look. “Your honour’s seen him often enough, I’ll be bound, for he’s always ramblin’ about somewhere. Old Mattie’s aunt to him. Howsomever, they’re summut akin; but it doesn’t behove me to say *what*. She fettles him, an’ looks after him as well as she can; but she’ll mak’ note out on him I guess:—‘what’s bred in the bone’ll niver come out o’ the flesh,’” continued Peter, significantly nodding his head; “but that’s neither here nor there; what’s done can’t be undone; and the Lord give us all grace to repent of our sins, and amend our lives for the time to come! Amen! amen!”

“It is a very necessary prayer,” said the curate, with impressive solemnity, his principles leading him to seize the most trivial opportunities of usefulness. “It is a suitable prayer for *all*; but more especially for those whose dim eyes and decaying frame bear witness that the ‘evil days’ are coming, in the which they shall say, ‘I have no pleasure in them.’”

“Please your reverence,” replied Peter, with increased gravity, as the party lingered in the hall, “that’s a part of the vases I wanted to teach Andrew, for ye see I niver was book-larned no further nor the Scriptures, an’ them I took off o’ the book at odd times, an’ I’ve niver forgotten ’em; so that made me willing to sarve the poor lad (though he’s gotten on apace for years, for all he’s sich a nipper-napper sort of a chap; your reverence wouldn’t think, now, he’s going for forty). Well, as I was sayin’,” continued the garrulous Peter, “‘Andrew,’” says I, ‘remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil—’”

“Well, but,” interrupted the minister, “can’t the poor lad read at *all*?”

“Lack-a-daisy!” exclaimed Peter, in surprise,

“how should poor folk know how to read? why, Squire Blackmire at the Grives can’t read without spelling a’ the big words:—he tell his letters? Lord love your honour, who’d be so pains-taking as to teach sich a dulberd?”

“I’ll try, for one,” said the benevolent curate, slipping a small piece of silver into the broad palm of the listening dwarf, who, grasping it eagerly, made sundry grotesque inclinations of his distorted body in manifestation of his gratitude.

“Your reverence will niver mak’ a schollard of him,” said Peter: “the poor cratur’s not wantin’ o’ sense, but he lets it run to waste sadly; he’s of a wild turn like, an’ his brain’s well-nigh crack’d wi’ givin’ heed to old wives’ fables an’ loose wanton songs the wild chaps as used to be about the priory picked up out o’ jest books. But times are altered for the better now; my lord’s a deal more staid o’ late years, since he’s nobody to put him up to what’s naught. We’ve no juncettins or carousins now.”

“An’ a dull time we have on’t, too,” muttered Andrew, as he skulked away. “One might as

well be shut up in an old church, as mewed up here like a rat in a barn. An' one's no better off now the fine gentles are com' down—'od rot 'em! for they do nothing in the world, from morning till night, but storm an' bluster. Am I to blame if my lord won't see 'em? What do they curse an' swear o' that fashion at me? An' their lazy loons o' servin' men orderin' me about, forsooth!—Od-zooks! but I get kicks an' cuffs enow and niver a farthin' worth o' thanks into th' bargain. Poor Andrew! thy ribs had need be ás hard as a gridiron," said the dwarf, viewing his diminutive person with the self-complacency which not unfrequently leads the most deplorable specimen of humanity into palpable errors of judgment. "Ah! I'd need be as strong as a horse; it's for ever and ever, 'Andrew, clean this firelock; or, 'brush this doublet;' or, 'mend twenty fires at one time.' Then Cicely calls, 'Run down to the cow-house an' milk the kine for me. (Cicely's a nist kind-hearted lass.) Well,—Gilbert shouts after me, 'Mind ye, Andrew, now, an' don't ye gie a drop of Daisy's milk to the wench; I want it a' for the hounds' pups.' Poor

Andrew! poor Andrew!" continued the dwarf, soliloquising, as he entered one of the out-houses; "this is nothing at all to Mistress Margery; pounce comes she upon me, like a hawk upon a sparrow,—'Didn't I tell ye, sirrah, not to do a thing without my bidding? You lazy imp! spending all your time in running after a set of idle vagabonds. I'll teach ye better manners than to set my words at nought. You'll do as I bid you another time, will you?' And with that she lifts up her gret bony arm, and gies me a blow as would knock some poor devils down in a whiffy. Heigho!—Ralph comes next.—His tongue's not so glib; but I can guess what's up; for he looks as sour as green sauce, an' as glum as Sexton Foxglove.—'Andrew,' says he, 'why ar'nt the knives cleaned to-day? Where's the silver tankard? I wonder what's become o' that half bottle o' Rhenish I left in the cupboard!'—as if Andrew could help all the riot an' confusion in the house. One should have a hundred pair o' hans to do a' the work, an' a good broad back to bear a' their gibbs an' jeers. I wonder now," mused he, "who's the best place on't—Shag,

the white pony, or I byself I? Let me see," counting his fingers, "Shag only carries Roger over the farm, when he goes to count the sheep, or fetch the kine up betimes, afore it's light; an' he's out in the woods wi' Gilbert, looking after th' game; an' he goes to meet Willy, the postman, at the four-lane ends, to bring letters; then he trots away to the next town for the doctor; an' belike all the younkens i' th' village run him down the lanes full gallop, when he's turned out o' summer nights; but that's nothing at all to Shag—it's no but play to the poor beast; his hide's o'er tough, and he niver roars, if he's run like a race-horse. Heigho! well, it's o' no use grumbling. If one was to fret oneself to fiddle-strings, who'd say 'good luck to ye?' so I'll e'en be merry an' wise. What's that song Master Sackbut used to sing—eh? Let me think," said Andrew, scratching his head to find his memory; "Under the—something—I'll be hanged now, if I can remember, for all I've sung it so often! Stay—'Un—under—under the green!'—now I have 'it!" The needful thread being fairly grasped, Andrew went on, like Willy the postman's

blind nag, when his head was turned the right way, without halting :

Under the green-wood tree
 Who loves to lie with me,
 And tune his merry note
 Unto the sweet bird's throat,
 Come hither ! come hither ! come hither !
 Here shall he see
 No enemy,
 But winter and rough weather.
 Tol de rol lol, &c.

“ That ’s a lie, now,” said Andrew ; “ there ’s ne’er a bird to be seen but a red-robin or two, tryin’ to pick up an odd grain at the barn-door, when Roger ’s thrashin’, or the chucks are a-feedin’. I wonder they can put such stories into books !”

Andrew tried to recollect something more to the purpose, but in vain. The only thing which occurred to him was the remnant of a French song, which Monsieur Jacques Groseille, a *cuisinier* of some eminence in his profession, and passionately addicted to the fine arts, had been accustomed to chant forth in his hearing. Andrew mutilated and Anglicised so many words in

the original version, that we have deemed it necessary to give an entire English translation of this precious *morceau*. Monsieur Jacques had, nevertheless, been heard to observe, “dat de Inglis sauvage had grande ear for de musique;” which sage opinion arose from the strong nasal accent, or *voce di testa*, for which Andrew was notorious, and for which the accomplished Frenchman had a national predilection. The cream of the ditty ran thus:—

King Pepin o' France
 Could shoulder a lance,
 A warrior brave was he;
 The Saracens gruff
 He sent off in a huff,
 Though he stood only four feet three.
 O for King Pepin—King Pepin, O!

Then followed the reign
 Of great Charlemagne,
 And Louis le Debonaire;
 And others ye see
 Who couldn't agree
 Which head—a gold crown should wear.
 O for King Pepin—King Pepin, O!

Then France was laid low
 Under Charles le Gros,
 And many more kings beside ;
 But I haven't got time
 To publish in rhyme
 How they liv'd, and fought, and dy'd !
 O for King Pepin—King Pepin, O !

Saint Lewis, they call,
 Was nothing at all
 To Pepin le Bref's *long* fame ;
 His stature was small,
 But his acts were tall,
 And they christen'd him by a wrong name.
 O for King Pepin—King Pepin, O !”

Making the old walls ring again with the harsh tones of his dissonant voice, Andrew set off across the woods to hunt up the stray poultry, followed by two barking curs, who alternately chased each other out of sight, and ran back again, wagging their tails and crouching at his feet, like conscience-struck truants.

Andrew paused a moment to take breath. Flinging his arms across his chest in a pendulous movement, and blowing the hot air from his mouth into his hands, he called out lustily,

“Ranger! Ranger! my old boy! where art gone this afternoon? I’ll lay any thing, now, Ranger’s somewhere skulking about my lord’s rooms; he follows every body that comes out or goes in, an’ trots up stairs after Ralph, as natterally as a Christian.”

Meantime, the curate of Birkendale had been conducted into the antechamber adjoining the sick-room, in readiness for the forthcoming audience.

The door was not quite closed, and as his eye shot through the long wide gallery leading to an infinity of apartments, not indeed splendid, but characterised by an air of antique grandeur and ancestral dignity, he could not refrain from inwardly moralising upon the wise dispensations of Providence in bringing down the varying condition of men to the same level.

“If death did not annihilate all distinctions,” thought he, “could the poor man bear to measure his lot with the proud? Would the crippled mendicant patiently sue at the rich man’s gate, did he not hope, that, like Lazarus of old, his unburdened soul might shortly find a resting-place

in Abraham's bosom? Would not he, from whom God in his eternal wisdom has shut up the stores of earthly abundance, have some reason to 'charge God with foolishness' had this world been the boundary of his eternal possessions? But, no! he who is 'clothed in purple and fine linen,' and who 'fareth sumptuously every day,' hath no chartered privilege, no longer lease of his existence, than the meanest hind who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow. The richest of his gifts will not bribe the hand of the destroyer, nor the most eloquent of his prayers arrest the 'dull cold ear of death.'—Alas! and is it so?" thought the curate, as he crossed the spacious landing, and gazed upon the splendid armorial bearings which surmounted the gilded folding-doors leading to the now-deserted banqueting-room, "must power, and rank, and wealth, lie down in the dark and loathsome grave?"

Familiarised as the curate was to those devout contemplations which teach Christians to place a due value upon all earthly pageantry, he had all the primitive simplicity which characterised his day and calling; nor could he approach the baron's apartment without a mingled feeling of awe and

respect at his near contact with so distinguished a personage. Little, indeed, did the reality justify these sublime anticipations, since they, whose acquaintance with the higher orders of society is derived through the medium of books and general representation, are very apt to find the objects or subjects of their exalted imagination dwindle into comparative insignificance as they make a personal approach to them.

Imagine, gentle reader, if you can, the sudden flight of the worthy minister's high-wrought notions respecting the dignity and authority of Richard de la Fontayne,—the descendant of a race of heroes and worthies whose names were traced back nearly to the Flood, and blazoned forth in sundry records of heraldic pomp—a peer of England—the lord of three manors, and armed by the strong hand of wealth and power, with almost despotic empire over a crowd of submissive vassals! His eye looked in vain for the external evidence of that importance shadowed forth by so many high prerogatives and emblematical devices.

On a richly-carved oaken bedstead, shaded by curtains of yellow damask, lay an old man, whose

withered features were half buried in a black velvet cap, and on whose shrivelled, wasted hand, as he extended it in gracious salutation to the man of God, the cold dews of death were already settled.

The curate had seen death in all its sad variety of wretchedness, as the inmate of many a miserable hovel could testify. There was a good deal of physical courage, as well as mental hardihood, in his composition, and he was never known to shrink from the painful duties incumbent upon his profession. Yet there was something in the present visitation of a more awful character than any he had ever witnessed.

Death, the best friend of the wretched, stole not like a welcome guest into the dreary abodes of poverty, or the unquiet haunts of squalid misery. The baron was bowed down less by time than sorrow, and amidst the desolation of a bereaved heart, retained sufficient of this world's good to render a longer life desirable. His thoughts still clung to his adopted child; and the little Bertha, the last scion of a fruitful branch, had insensibly twined around his heart. He loved to hear her

innocent prattle as she climbed his knee, to stroke with her soft hand his furrowed cheek ; and her advancing womanhood cheered him still further, by holding forth, in her virtues, the prop and stay of his declining years.

Here then was the King of Terrors, like an all-conquering and resistless tyrant in the field of bitter and severe conflict ! Here was death, in the chamber of the mighty, opposing his terrific sceptre to the combined host of wealth, rank, and fame ! Here was the armed one grappling with the valiant, and the strong one waging a warfare with a desperate combatant. A crowd of indefinable impressions rushed upon the curate's mind.—He sat down to analyse his feelings ; and, unmindful of the presence of any other than the Omniscient Being to whom he now preferred his secret and ardent petition for grace to know and do his will in this awful extremity—he remained for a few minutes buried in profound meditation.

He lifted up his eye, and it rested upon the large Bible which lay upon the table. He opened it, not with any avowed intention, yet with something nevertheless of that superstitious feeling

which leads some enthusiasts to turn the contents of the sacred volume into a lottery of fate. The particular passage which met his eye was that one in which the patriarch Job solemnly attests his innocence of premeditated guilt. The curate, who was accustomed to extemporaneous delivery, and whose feelings now rose superior to the petty forms of rank and state, involuntarily began to recite various portions, adapting his comments as much as possible to the wants and condition of the invalid.

The baron listened with the deepest attention—there was something in the energetic manner of the minister as well as in the selection of the different passages, which corresponded intimately with his own sensations. It came home to his heart, and the conscious sorrows of his own stricken bosom gave force to the corroborating testimony of distant ages.

His oppressed soul re-echoed the mournful sentiment of the patriarch as he bewailed the bitterness of his lot, and deprecated the terrors of the Almighty. In the fervour of his emotion, he repeated aloud, “ My brethren have dealt deceitfully

with me." As Job recapitulates his former blessings, when the sun of prosperity shone upon him, when "his children were yet around him," the poor old baron groaned inwardly till, as the curate passed on from the exculpatory strains in which he addresses his heartless reproachful companions, "Miserable comforters are ye all!" to that heart-rending appeal, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye, my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me!" the debilitated frame of the sick man gave way under the united pressure of disease and sorrow.

Covering his face with his feeble hands, to conceal emotions too sacred for observation, Lord de la Fontayne wept like a child!

The softened mind of the baron was now open to the most salutary impressions; and as the worthy minister knelt by his bed-side and poured forth, in earnest prayer, the overflowings of his pious zeal, the gentle dews of heavenly consolation gradually shed their benign influence upon his bosom. The strong-holds of pride and rebellion had suffered much from the assaults of affliction, without being entirely vanquished. Now

the command was gone forth from the mouth of Omnipotence, and the "stony heart was become a heart of flesh!"

The first-fruits of this blessed change appeared in the anxiety evinced by the poor sufferer to dispose of all his worldly effects carefully and conscientiously. A fresh deed was drawn up to this effect in the presence of the minister. The greater part of his personal effects were bequeathed to the old housekeeper, with this observation, "She hath been greatly wronged, and it is fit that I make restitution for the injustice of others."

The mission to Scotland was then finally arranged; and the curate being provided with every necessary comfort, very cheerfully undertook this formidable journey at such an inclement season of the year, under the full persuasion that it was the special appointment of Heaven, who often fixed upon the most humble and unworthy agents for the accomplishment of his mysterious designs.

Satisfied with having unburdened his conscience on these points, the baron next struggled to overcome his animosity against the domestic in-

vaders of his peace, and patiently settling himself down into a state of calm endurance, quietly awaited the issue of the curate's visit to Castle Invercald.

CHAPTER XIV.

A willing heart adds feather to the heel,
And makes the clown a winged Mercury.

JOANNA BAILLIE.

Thy injuries would teach Patience to blaspheme ;
Yet still thou art a dove.

BEAUMONT.

THE Rev. Master Nathaniel Childe reached the place of his destination in safety, and upon delivering his credentials to the hand of a female domestic, was informed that her mistress had been confined to a sick-bed for many months past, and was unable either to see a stranger or transact any kind of business. Great was the joy, however, diffused over the little establishment, when it was announced that Master Evelyn stood next in succession to the English title and estate. The inhabitants of this remote territory had lived

so secluded from all intercourse with the world, as to have never heard by any casualty of the recent changes at Norman Abbey, which had wrought this revolution in Evelyn's favour.

The young gentleman himself was not a little elated at his sudden and unexpected elevation. To be promoted from the solitary condition of a rambling chieftain—the son of a proscribed assassin—the liege lord only of a forlorn uncultivated district, to an inheritance of comparative splendour and dignity; to be the proud owner of a spot encompassed with so many traditionary charms; to be styled “my lord” by a train of submissive dependents—it was too much for the soaring ambition even of the imaginative boy, and his swelling heart overflowed in tears at the first salutation which acknowledged him the lawful representative of these honours.

Laden with verbal messages and grateful acknowledgments from the poor afflicted widow, the curate was preparing to depart, when a long and severe storm set in, which prevented the possibility of travelling during the winter months. This dreary interval was not lost by the curate,

who was wont to convert every apparent inconvenience or obstruction to some profitable account. The library at Castle Invercald was stored with some valuable authors. The youth, vivacity, and intelligence of the young lord interested his benevolent heart; and the courtesies which he daily received by the express orders of the Lady Grace were of so liberal a nature, and so delicately administered, as to impress him with a high sense of her character. The principal alloy to these gratifications, however, was the painful degree of suspense to which his protracted stay would subject the poor baron, and the fear lest the shattered frame of the latter would give way in the interval.

With the inmates of Norman Abbey the hours crept on more drearily and heavily. As the time drew near the curate's expected return, the trembling solicitude of the baron increased, and every approaching footfall was listened to with the anxious weariness of "hope deferred." At length, when even poor Mattie began to despair outright, one bright sunny morning in February, Ralph appeared at his bedside, and announced the reverend pastor.

“ Courage, my lord,” said the curate, smiling like a messenger of glad tidings, as he approached the bedside of the poor invalid ; “ The Lord is gracious, and merciful, and long-suffering. He hath restored to you, as he did to righteous Job aforetime, those treasures which he had withdrawn but for a season, for the exercise of faith and prayer.”

The dim eye of the baron kindled at these words ; but the momentary flash died away, as he exclaimed mournfully, “ My beloved child !—hath she refused to take pity on my necessities ?”

“ The Lady Grace,” returned the curate, “ doth greet your lordship with all loving reverence ; but she cannot proffer her dutiful service in person. She hath sustained a fiery trial ; and though doubtless she will come forth out of the furnace like gold seven times purified, yet doth she bear the heavy marks of this weighty infliction. She is ill, my lord, sick at heart and faint in body, and fretted above measure that she cannot mete her actions by her will. Truly it may be said of her, in all godly sincerity, ‘ the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ ”

The baron sank back upon his pillow with a feeling of disappointment, grasped the hand of his humble friend, and feebly articulated, "Be a friend to this poor lost one,—a true friend, as ye have been to me; and, oh! merciful Heaven," added he, glancing his eye upward, "bless thou the fatherless and widow; pour down the riches of thine eternal wisdom upon them; and, as thou hast, through thy ministering servant, showered on this dying head the abundance of thy spiritual consolations, so may the living stewards of thy temporal blessings learn to make to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, by distributing to the necessities of thy destitute children!"

These were almost the last words which the baron ever spoke. He fell into a drowsy lethargy, which continued for several days. Nature, whose powers had been kept in a state of abeyance, through the force of excitement, quickly retreated; and it was only by the motion of his lips, and the inarticulate murmurings which at times escaped him, that it could be said, "he still lives."

Meantime, the curate returned to his duties, with a lightened heart. He had discharged his office with satisfaction to himself and comfort to others; yet, his feelings were far remote from vain-glory, and he failed not to utter a fervent thanksgiving to Him from whom cometh "every good and perfect gift," that he had been enabled to persevere in this labour of love. He despatched a messenger daily to the priory, but forbore to make personal inquiries, as his late intercourse with the baron had excited considerable alarm amongst the self-invited guests at Fontainville, some of whom cursed him for a "sneaking parson;" others pronounced him to be a disguised emissary of the Romish church, seeking to obtain, under pretext of spiritual counsel, some share of its wrested patrimony. The gentler part of the community "feared the poor old baron's faculties must be sadly deranged, to permit such a sad state of things; it was truly lamentable to see such a strong mind and good understanding undermined by sickness; and still more to find him governed by a set of ignorant domestics;" who, they insinuated, had doubtless hired the clerical bravo to frighten him

out of his wits, and mould him to their purposes, by the terrors of a future state. All agreed, however, in considering the poor inoffensive minister as a very *offensive* and *designing* character; and, in accordance with these views, they combined to treat him with every indirect species of insult. Sundry practical jokes, more ingenious than humane, were played off at his expense. These, so long as they continued of undecided hostility, were prudently disregarded by the worthy curate, who endeavoured as much as possible "to live peaceably with all men." The edge of the witty sarcasms often uttered in his hearing, became blunted by his extreme simplicity and ignorance of the peculiar phraseology which concealed these satires, till they were compelled to adopt a less polite method of testifying their aversion to the whole canting tribe, of which the minister was styled the leader and abettor.

His absence upon the late secret expedition suspended their animosity for some time; but his re-appearance revived all their old prejudices, and drew forth the most unequivocal expressions of dislike from these high-bred and polished gentry.

Whilst the baron lived, they found it impossible to assume an independence of action, and equally impolitic to attempt it; yet the younger and more irascible of his kindred played off in ambuscade an unmerciful quantity of small shot, and discharged their artillery in all directions. Placards were stuck up at the great doors; offensive epithets (such as no person of high station in these days could be supposed to use even in the field, or on the turf) were liberally showered into the crown of his hat; whilst a domestic was ordered to obtain surreptitiously the sable garment which indicated his clerical function, and ordered to fling it after the reverend visitor!

All other affronts had been patiently borne; but this last public insult to his holy office the curate of Birkendale accounted little inferior to blasphemy.

From that hour he ceased to call at the priory, after manfully expressing his displeasure at the unmerited usage he had received.

The poor baron lingered for nearly a fortnight, without receiving any other sustenance than what

was poured into his mouth by small quantities of nourishing stimulants ; and this plan was at length reduced to the simple action of moistening his lips. He lay insensible and motionless—a melancholy spectacle of fading mortality.

His attendants, who had anxiously watched him during this crisis, were now fairly worn out ; and Margery, whose robust constitution began to feel the stupifying effects of watchful days, and wakeful nights, had fallen asleep in the very act of pouring out a draught.

She had slumbered several hours, when sounds of strange and awful import roused her from her recumbent position. She approached the bed, drew aside the curtains gently—all was silent—dreary—death-like. A chill crept over the frame of the undaunted housekeeper. She grasped the cold hand of the baron with involuntary quickness—it resisted not her hard pressure. She unclosed the window-shutters, and the first cold rays of a clear frosty morning disclosed the ghastly features of her master, rigid and motionless. The cords of life were severed—the death struggle was over—and the quivering sickly flame of the

night-lamp wasting in the socket at the foot of the bed was a meet emblem of the last hours which closed the mortal career of RICHARD, BARON DE LA FONTAYNE !

CHAPTER XV.

Here lies the great!—False marble! where?
Nothing but sordid dust lies here!

It was on a bitterly cold morning, succeeding to a deep fall of snow, that the remains of the baron were conveyed to the family vault, which lay at the distance of three miles from the abbey. A thick fog hung upon the gelid waters of the lake in front of the priory, effectually concealing all distant objects, and exhausting its humidity upon the leafless trees of the young plantation, whose naked stems and spiral branches were laden with the hoar-frost, partially distilling in fitful showers upon the beaten and wasting track. Yet, in this wild and desolate scenery, unrelieved by the bold, majestic features of a more northern region, there was something not unpleasing to the eye—something of romantic interest in the fairy

tracery which decorated the chilly landscape. The delicate softness of the tufted pines, veiled in a fleecy shower ; the feathery brightness of the expanding forest trees clothed in artificial foliage ; the glittering dew-drops, pendulous from the extremity of the overhanging branch ; the air-built looms of the spider artist, whose tattered webs hung in crystalline festoons upon the thorny hedges—all gave a wild and diversified charm to the true lover of nature.

The wide pathway had been laboriously cut out at the commencement of the storm, and presented, from the united operations of the rimy and frosty atmosphere, a complete glassy surface, dangerous in the extreme to the horsemen and carriages thronging the long procession.

Secluded as the baron had been during the latter part of his solitary existence, his public life had been of too marked a character, and his ancestry was too distinguished to be overlooked at a time, when, alas ! honours had ceased to dignify, and when gaudy ceremonials and pompous show degenerated into empty shadows of departed grandeur.

Yet the pride of the living exults in its fancied triumphs over the humiliation of its final exit, and man decks the breathless corpse of his fellow-man with the insignia of every powerful attribute which the arbitrary distinctions of society have conferred.

The gloomy hatchment, with its appropriate devices, told, as it proudly rested over the gothic portico, that the head of a noble family was laid low; although, to the discomfiture of some, no grim death's head or crossbones betokened its final extinction. The floating banners displayed, in various compartments, the direct and collateral honours attached to the house of La Fontayne.

The sable equipages, and jet-black steeds decorated with nodding plumes and parti-coloured escutcheons, moved along the avenue with a stately and measured pace. The neighbouring gentry and cavaliers of noble birth, with short black mantlets flung over their rich doublets, and a single feather stuck in their steeple-crowned hats, brought up the rear.

As the procession gained the main road, the cavaliers, who had found much difficulty in re-

straining the impetuosity of their fiery barbs, in conformity to the requisite ceremonial, were now required to halt, as a courier at full speed announced the arrival of a distinguished officer in the king's household, deputed by the sovereign to pay this last mark of respect to his faithful, but long-neglected equerry. During the interval which attended the announcement and arrival of the royal messenger, not a few murmurs and broken imprecations burst from the lips of the attendant cavaliers. The half-starved members of this gloomy pageant sawed their arms backwards and forwards; the impatient coursers champed their bits, and exhaled clouds of smoky vapour from their nostrils; whilst the dripping fog occasionally brought down a slight avalanche, or descended in cold pattering drops upon the shoulders of the frozen riders.

When at length the cavalcade was set in motion, the solemnity of its former movements gave place to a more rapid step, till it arrived within a short distance of the village church.

By the express desire of the baron, his funeral obsequies were performed by the curate of Bir-

kendale, who was, in fact, the officiating minister of the parish.

It was a trying office to the poor man, for he had contracted a deep and sincere regard for the deceased; and his voice faltered as he repeated these words of awful solemnity—"Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust."

Just at this moment a herald stepped forth, and, as the coffin, stripped of its cumbrous appendages, was lowered upon the trellis, pronounced, in a loud and emphatical tone of voice, the style of the deceased.

The contrast between the pompous display of glittering titles, and the utter nothingness which it described, struck a dreariness to the bosoms of the immediate attendants, who each involuntarily turned to survey the narrow boundaries which enclosed the owner of so many wide domains.

One solitary lamp hung from the centre of the damp walls, throwing a wild glare upon the piles of mouldering coffins, whose emblazoned arms were completely illegible by the corrosion of time.

"Alas!" thought the curate, as the ceremony was concluded, "what now remains to the pos-

essor of so many high-sounding names, or to the lord of so many ample territories? That name is no longer a part of his new existence, and those earthly dominions are passed into the hands of another! But," added he, in the triumph of Christian exaltation, "if the virtues of our departed brother be, indeed, engraven on the records of eternity; if he now share in the glorious inheritance of the saints in light; if his victorious faith hath won the immortal guerdon, and his beatified spirit now surrounds the throne of Heaven; should I not rather rejoice that he hath exchanged time for eternity?—the perishable things of this world for the enduring honours of a higher state?—and the worn-out, threadbare garment of mortality for the rich mantle of blessedness?"

These reflections sprang from the root of fervent disinterested piety; for it could not escape even the simple-minded pastor that he had just lost a valuable friend. Single-hearted in the extreme, and unused to the crooked schemes of worldly policy, he was, nevertheless, at no loss to comprehend that a fortunate casualty had been the

means of attaching to his interest one no less *able* than *willing* to serve him. The tie was now dissolved; nor did it seem reasonable to expect an equal degree of gratitude or interest in his successors. Their necessary ignorance of his claims would prevent them from properly appreciating the silent, unostentatious services, whose soothing influence had smoothed the death-bed of their aged relative. These minor considerations were, at this awful solemnity, entirely overborne by a crowd of superior and elevated emotions as he pronounced the final benediction; and, leading the way out of the dreary vault, pursued his lonely course homewards. In a less exalted frame of mind and feeling, the greater number of the nominal mourners returned to the abbey to partake of a plentiful repast provided on the occasion. With appetites sharpened by the keen air and exercise, the guests prepared to do justice to the liberal fare which was spread out upon different tables, according to the gradations of rank. Wine and strong home-brewed ale flowed in abundance; the elongated visages of the chief mourners relaxed into jovial smiles, and every

one seemed disposed to bury his regrets in the inspiring bowl. Huge bonfires were blazing in the neighbouring hamlets. Buns and ale were distributed in every direction ; and the last scene in the drama of mortal existence was closed by an epilogue of vulgar rioting, and rustic merry-making.

Meantime, a party of the late baron's kinsmen, at the head of whom sat the legal functionary in all the conscious importance of his office, were assembled in an inner apartment to hear the last will and testament of the deceased. After a long and tedious preamble, including more "vain repetitions" than any heathen ever used, and containing a larger quantity of nonsense than could have been credited since the building of the Tower of Babel, the document framer proceeded to the still greater intricacies of the will itself. Little of its prolix matter could be generally understood ; but the sum total appeared to prove that the late Richard, Baron de la Fontayne, owing to certain disappointments, and legal incumbrances, had little to bequeath his dearly-beloved relatives saving his blessing and best wishes. Great indignation was

expressed that he should have left his only remaining personal effects to the former house-keeper, who was reputed to have lived on terms of dubious intimacy with his predecessor Paul de la Fontayne. The agent was attacked on all sides for his breach of promise, and it was not until he had pointed out to them a flaw in this part of the will, which laid it open to cruel and vexatious litigation, that he could in any measure appease the clamorous pretenders. An annuity left to the old servants, small legacies to the rest, together with a strong recommendation of the curate to the consideration of his successor, were passed over with the same qualifications.

The baron had left behind him no property in specie to answer the former demands; and the latter, like many documents of a more urgent nature, were ordered to "lie on the table."

The last and most important subject was next discussed. After numerous rival claimants had endeavoured to prove their right to the succession, by a reference to the genealogical tree which was hung up at one side of the room in a rich framework of gilt ebony,—after unlocking the brazen

clasps of the ponderous folio which enclosed the family records, each individual, as he traced his own name and lineage in the illuminated manuscripts, directed an appealing look towards the agent. The mighty man of business appeared to be collecting all his forces for some extraordinary disclosure; he looked unutterable things! a Chinese puzzle—a royal enigma, difficult of solution—a silent oracle ready primed for utterance.

When at length the bubble burst, how were the baron's worthy kinsmen dismayed to find, beyond a doubt, that the lawful heir to the deceased existed in the person of Evelyn, the only son of the exiled Sir Walter de la Fontayne!

Muttering curses on the perversity of Dame Fortune, the parties withdrew to chew the cud of bitter thought, and lament over the useless time they had spent in dancing attendance upon the sick man; whilst the agent, with that careful foresight for which he was celebrated, returned to arrange his own plans before the arrival of the new occupants.

JUST PUBLISHED
BY JAMES COCHRANE AND CO.,
11, WATERLOO PLACE, PALL MALL.

I.

THE NOVELIST'S LIBRARY;

WITH BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL NOTICES

BY THOMAS ROSCOE, ESQ.;

AND ILLUSTRATIONS

BY GEORGE CRUIKSHANK.

PRICE ONLY FIVE SHILLINGS EACH.

*Publishing in Monthly Volumes, uniform with the
Waverley Novels.*

WHILST the productions of writers of fiction, subsequent to the time of FIELDING and SMOLLETT, are presented in a periodical form as candidates for public favour, the Proprietors are encouraged to extend the field of rational entertainment, by offering to English readers CHEAP EDITIONS of the works of those great painters of life and manners who reflect lustre on their respective countries; comprehending only such NOVELS and ROMANCES as have been unequivocally stamped with popular regard, and which, from their *long admitted superiority over all competitors of their class*, and their translation into various languages, are for ever associated with the *literature of the world*.

THE NOVELIST'S LIBRARY

Will embrace the following distinguished Works:

TOM JONES. <i>Fielding.</i>	THE MAN OF THE WORLD.
JOSEPH ANDREWS. <i>Do.</i>	<i>Mackenzie.</i>
AMELIA. <i>Do.</i>	THE MAN OF FEELING. <i>Do.</i>
RODERICK RANDOM. <i>Smollett.</i>	JULIA DE ROUBIGNE. <i>Do.</i>
PEREGRINE PICKLE. <i>Do.</i>	DON QUIXOTE. <i>Cervantes.</i>
HUMPHRY CLINKER. <i>Do.</i>	GIL BLAS. <i>Le Sage.</i>
VICAR OF WAKEFIELD. <i>Goldsmith.</i>	GUZMAN D'ALPARACHE, OF THE
TRISTRAM SHANDY. <i>Sterne.</i>	SPANISH ROGUE. <i>Do.</i>
GULLIVER'S TRAVELS. <i>Swift.</i>	ARABIAN NIGHTS' ENTERTAIN- MENTS;

with others of equal popularity, whose authors, it is acknowledged, wrote 'for all time,' and whose happy illustrations of character and manners prove them to have been familiarly acquainted with human nature in all its varieties, and capable of representing life

as they found it; thus furnishing an intellectual banquet, replete at once with instruction and amusement.

The First Volume of this Series contains SMOLLETT'S HUMPHRY CLINKER, complete in One Volume, with a MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR, by THOMAS ROSCOE, Esq.; a fine Portrait by FREEMAN, and Four Illustrations by GEORGE CRUIKSHANK.

The Second Volume contains SMOLLETT'S RODERICK RANDOM complete in One Volume, with Five Illustrations by GEORGE CRUIKSHANK.

The Third and Fourth Volumes contain the whole of SMOLLETT'S PEREGRINE PICKLE, similarly illustrated.

The Fifth and Sixth Volumes contain the whole of TOM JONES, with a LIFE OF FIELDING by THOMAS ROSCOE, Esq.; a Portrait after HOGARTH, engraved by FREEMAN, and Eight Illustrations.

The Seventh Volume contains FIELDING'S JOSEPH ANDREWS, with Four Illustrations.

“ We are glad to observe that the novels published in this collection are selected with so much good taste. After the sickening trash which is perpetually spawned from the inexhaustible superfection of modern novelists, a sight of the sterling works of Fielding and Smollett is a great relief. TOM JONES, HUMPHRY CLINKER, RODERICK RANDOM, and PEREGRINE PICKLE, have already appeared in this collection. The volumes are very neatly and accurately printed, and contain notices of the lives of Fielding and Smollett from the pen of Mr. Roscoe. What, however, chiefly distinguishes this from other editions of the same novels is, that they are illustrated by MR. GEORGE CRUIKSHANK, who has executed the task with a degree of spirit and humour well worthy of the subject of his pencil. Although Mr. Cruikshank has entered into the odd conceits of his authors more felicitously in some instances than in others, yet in no one case have the humorous scenes which the novelists describe suffered in the artist's hands. His representation of Humphry's introduction to the Bramble family is very clever. The wo-begone appearance of Humphry excites commiseration, equal even to that which moved the squire's beast when Clinker stood in ragged misery before him. The curiosity of Mrs. Tabitha is seen getting the better of her horror over the top of her fan; and if one did not know that Winifred Jenkins were thinking of *alabaster*, yet it would not be difficult to tell that she affected to be shocked only for the purpose of saving appearances. In no respect inferior is 'Humphry's dragging his master out of the water by the ear.' The earnestness and fright of Humphry, and the astonishment and rage of Old Bramble, lying on his back, and lugged along by one ear like a half-drowned dog, are admirably depicted. Among the illustrations of RODERICK RANDOM, 'Strap's fight at the Raven,' and 'Roderick threatening Gawky,' are, perhaps, the best.

'The Three Black Hairs,' and 'Tailors baffling a Bailiff,' in *PEREGRINE PICKLE*, are both very rich; as also are 'The affrighted Sentinel,' and the 'Battle Royal in the Church-yard,' which are among the illustrations of *TOM JONES*. The latter, excepting perhaps the figure of Molly Seagrim, is faultless, and quite equal to Hogarth's illustration of a somewhat similar scene in *Hudibras*. We cannot help congratulating our readers upon the republication of these admirable novels in so cheap and agreeable a form. A single chapter of any of them is worth more than the whole bundle of those contemptible productions of the silver-fork school, which are called 'fashionable novels,' but which have no more claim to be called 'fashionable' than a pert and affected waiting-maid has to be dubbed a lady, or a knowing prig of a footman to be called a gentleman."—*Times*, Dec. 15, 1831.

 II.

In 2 vols. with Sixteen Illustrations by *STRUTT* and others, and an elegant portrait of *DE FOE*, engraved on steel, price 10s. neatly bound,

DE FOE'S ROBINSON CRUSOE;

COMPRISING

A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

WRITTEN EXPRESSLY FOR THIS EDITION;

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE ISLAND OF JUAN FERNANDEZ;

AND AN ACCOUNT OF

AN INDIAN WHO WAS LEFT THERE BEFORE THE TIME OF *ALEXANDER SELKIRK*, DERIVED FROM AUTHENTIC SOURCES.

The whole forming, with a Notice of *SELKIRK*, the most complete Edition ever published of this celebrated Romance.

"No fiction in any language was ever better supported than the *ADVENTURES OF ROBINSON CRUSOE*."—*Dr. Blair*.

"*Robinson Crusoe* is the first book I ever read with pleasure, and I believe every boy in Europe might say the same."—*Mar-montel*.

"Was there ever any thing written by mere man, that was wished longer by its readers, excepting *DON QUIXOTE*, *ROBINSON CRUSOE*, and the *PILGRIM'S PROGRESS*?"—*Johnson*.

"*De Foe's* style is every where beautiful, but plain and homely. *ROBINSON CRUSOE* is delightful to all ranks and classes, and worthy to find a shelf in the libraries of the wealthiest, and the most learned."—*Charles Lamb*.

III.

NEWTON FORSTER ;

OR,

THE MERCHANT SERVICE.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "THE KING'S OWN."

In 3 Vols. post 8vo. Price 24s. *bd.*

"We recommend these volumes. Those who read for amusement will be instructed, and those who wish to be instructed will be amused—we have been both."—*Athenæum*.

"We know few writers of the present day who have more reality in their sketching than Captain Marryat: both vigorous and original, he gives at once life and interest to his scenes: few writers, either, have made greater improvement since their first appearance than he has; and we do not hesitate to give the preference to 'Newton Forster,' in comparison with any of his works. He is one of the most original, striking, and powerful authors of the day."—*Literary Gazette*.

"Newton Forster is as pleasant a production as we would wish to read. Its ingredients are life, and truth, and character. But we like it not so much for its incidents as for its quick and just perception of character, for its easy and natural dialogue, and, we ought to add, for its just and liberal sentiments on the subject of nautical government. SMOLLETT's description of an act of impressment is neither more lively nor yet more indignant than similar scenes described by our Author, a Post-Captain in the Navy. 'Newton Forster' is the history of the rise of a young man from the situation of Mate in a coasting vessel to be Captain of an Indiaman. Of course, love, mystery, adventure, and all matters of the same quality, are interwoven agreeably enough. But that with which we are most gratified is the nice drawing, or rather acting of character throughout. The father of the hero is an old optician, watchmender, and spectacle maker. For truth, and vivacity of representation, there is not a more perfect character in the whole round of fiction."—*Spectator*.

IV.

THE STAFF OFFICER;

OR,

THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE:

A TALE OF REAL LIFE.

“The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together; our virtues would be proud if our faults whipped them not; and our crimes would despair if they were not cherished by our virtues.”

BY OLIVER MOORE.

In 3 Vols. post 8vo. - 24s.

“The writer’s power is in discriminating *female* character; but as he judiciously makes it develop itself by incident, to illustrate this would require scenes and pages to be transferred to our columns. As a whole, this novel will be read with interest: it is light and pleasant; with many very natural scenes, many excellent and well-drawn characters, and without one line or word of affectation or pretence.”—*Athenæum*.

“There is a great deal of character in this novel. Many of the pictures it contains are striking but yet natural, and some passages are deeply affecting.”—*Dublin Warder*.

“The chief merit of this work consists in the faithful and accurate sketches, in which it abounds, of the life and manners of the times. As a picture of real life, it is far beyond most of the present day.”—*Academic Chronicle*.

“This is a most entertaining work: it is written with great spirit, elegance, and candour. The delineation of character (particularly that of many distinguished individuals officially connected with Ireland during the Pitt administration) is skilfully and vividly drawn; and the multifarious incidents,—several of which are of a highly *piquant* description,—are given with a tact and delicacy creditable to the judgment and talent of the author. We can say with truth, that we have fairly gone through this tale of real life without being cloyed or wearied for a single moment; but that it excited, and kept up, an interest in our minds, which few volumes, designed for mere amusement, have been able to inspire. It ought, at least, to be in every circulating library.”—*Brighton Herald*.

V.

THE CLUB BOOK;

CONSISTING OF

ORIGINAL TALES

By the following distinguished Authors:

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM, ESQ.	WILLIAM JERDAN, ESQ.
THE ETRICK SHEPHERD.	D. M. MOIR, ESQ.
LD. FRANCIS LEVESON GOWER.	A. PICKEN, ESQ.
JOHN GALT, ESQ.	TYRONE POWER, ESQ.
G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.	LEITCH RITCHIE, ESQ.

Second Edition. In 3 Vols. post 8vo. Price 24s. boards.

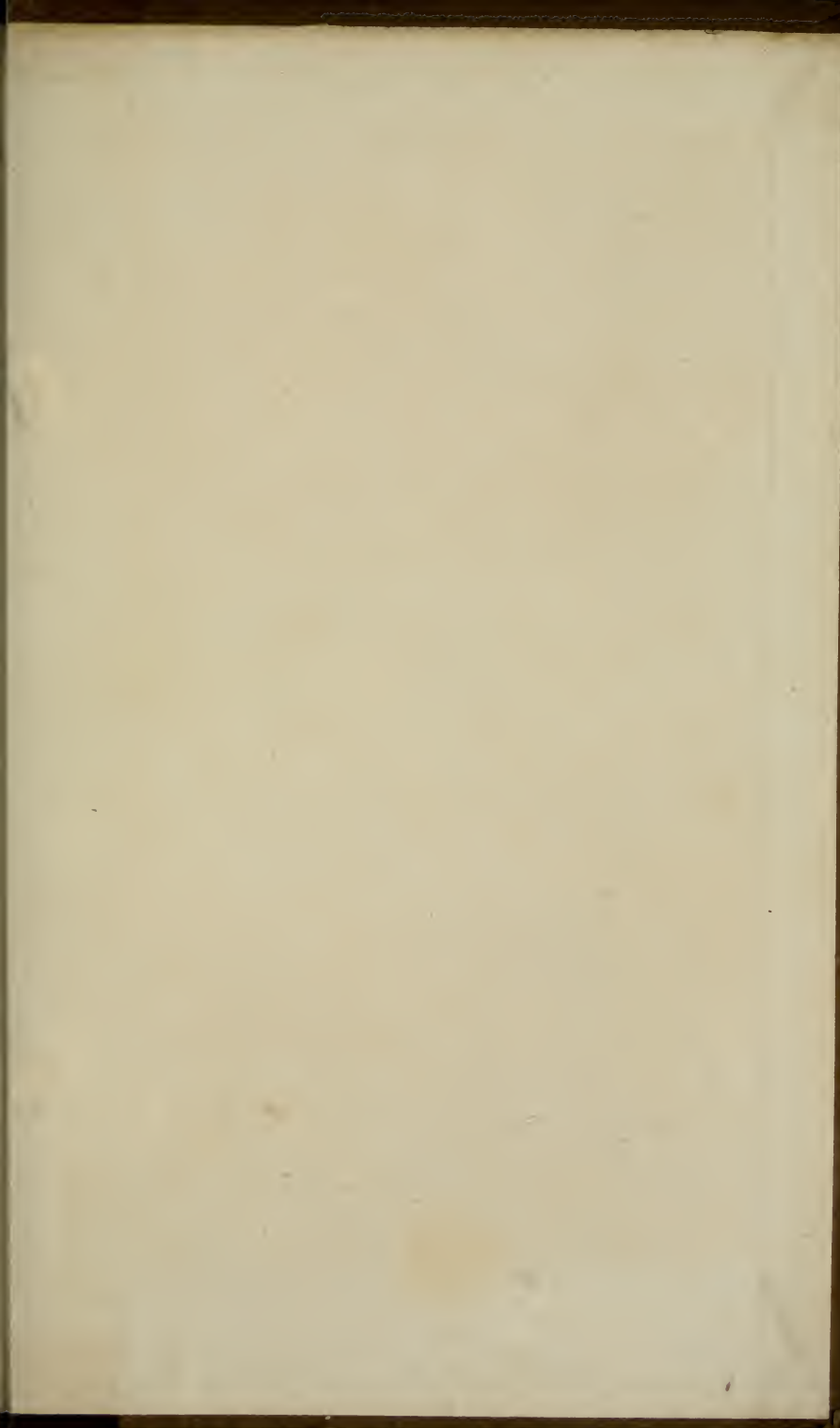
CONTENTS.

Bertrand de la Croix. By the Author of "RICHELIEU."	The Deer-Stalkers. By A. PICKEN.
Haddad-Ben-Ahab. By the Author of "ANNALS OF THE PARISH."	The Laidlaws and the Scotts. By the ETRICK SHEPHERD.
The Gipsy. By the Author of "THE LOST HEIR."	The Bridal of Borthwick. By the Author of "MAUNSLIE WAUGH."
Eisenbach. By the Author of "THE DOMINIE'S LEGACY."	The Unguarded Hour. By JOHN GALT.
The Fatal Whisper. By JOHN GALT.	The Cheatrie Packman. By LEITCH RITCHIE.
The Sleepless Woman. By WILLIAM JERDAN.	The Bogle o' the Brae: a Queer Courting Story. By the ETRICK SHEPHERD.
Dramatic Scenes. By LORD FRANCIS LEVESON GOWER.	The Book of Life. By JOHN GALT.
Gowden Gibbie. By ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.	The Three Kearneys. By A. PICKEN.
The Painter. By JOHN GALT.	

"One of the most pleasantly attractive, and permanently interesting books of the season."—*Scots Times*.

"The variety of 'The Club Book' will recommend it to every class of readers who read for amusement."—*Literary Gazette*.

"The idea of this work is excellent. Here is variety to tickle the dull appetite of the public, and the feast is equal to the bill of fare. All parties, without exception, have done well. We have our favourite tales of course, and so will every reader have—and the preference will depend on his feelings and humour; but it will be admitted by all, as a whole, the collection is excellent."—*Athenæum*.



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 084210191